

RED CHINA'S FLYING HORDES: AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHINESE
COMMUNIST AIR FORCE DURING THE TAIWAN STRAIT CRISES, 1954-5 and
1958
by

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ABSTRACT

During the 1950s tensions twice flared in the Taiwan Strait. From 1954 through 1955 and again in 1958 armed conflict between the People's Republic of China and the United States seemed imminent. During this period, Americans were troubled especially by the buildup and activity of the People's Liberation Army Air Force. Knowing whoever controlled the sky also controlled the surface, Eisenhower and his advisors kept an eye on the Chinese Communist air force. Many U.S. actions can be explained by examining what Americans, especially Eisenhower and his advisors, thought about the Chinese Communist air force. Ultimately, most Americans overestimated the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army Air Force despite much evidence to suggest that the PLAAF was a poorly supplied and poorly trained air force. Americans overestimated the Chinese Communist air force primarily because of images and ideas regarding the Chinese present in American culture. In the process of interpreting events in the Taiwan Strait, these images and ideas led Americans to emphasize certain PLAAF capabilities, to assume the PLAAF had capabilities that it had not demonstrated, and to downplay or dismiss any weaknesses present in the Chinese Communist armed forces. This study provides insight into American actions during the Taiwan Strait Crises. It also provides insight into how culture affects the process of interpreting intelligence.

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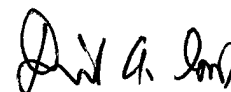
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DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

ABSTRACT

During the 1950s tensions twice flared in the Taiwan Strait. From 1954 through 1955 and again in 1958 armed conflict between the People's Republic of China and the United States seemed imminent. During this period, Americans were troubled especially by the buildup and activity of the People's Liberation Army Air Force. Knowing whoever controlled the sky also controlled the surface, Eisenhower and his advisors kept an eye on the Chinese Communist air force. Many U.S. actions can be explained by examining what Americans, especially Eisenhower and his advisors, thought about the Chinese Communist air force. Ultimately, most Americans overestimated the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army Air Force despite much evidence to suggest that the PLAAF was a poorly supplied and poorly trained air force. Americans overestimated the Chinese Communist air force primarily because of images and ideas regarding the Chinese present in American culture. In the process of interpreting events in the Taiwan Strait, these images and ideas led Americans to emphasize certain PLAAF capabilities, to assume the PLAAF had capabilities that it had not demonstrated, and to downplay or dismiss any weaknesses present in the Chinese Communist armed forces. This study provides insight into American actions during the Taiwan Strait Crises. It also provides insight into how culture affects the process of interpreting intelligence.

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2002

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Of course, my thesis advisors had tremendous influence on this work and their advice, comments, critiques, are borne out on the pages that follow. Sue Zschoche's knowledge of American Cold War history greatly influenced this work. Also, she provided some much needed encouragement and some excellent advice. Evidence of Donald J. Mrozek's careful eye and sharp mind can be found throughout this work. He forced me to focus my thoughts and words and helped make this study a more coherent and concise work. I am tremendously thankful to my major professor, David A. Graff, who labored through numerous drafts with me. He directed me and guided me

throughout my research and writing and he helped me clarify my thoughts and words. His knowledge of Chinese military history and American perceptions of China has been invaluable. Without his help, this thesis could not have been possible.

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DEDICATION

For my Father, Ilhan

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Due to the confusion surrounding the Romanization of Chinese names I have used names most familiar to Americans. Therefore, I use Chiang Kai-shek instead of Jiang Jieshi, Quemoy instead of Jinmen or Kinmen, Matsu instead of Mazu, Pescadores instead of Penghu, and the list goes on. When using anything other than the pinyin system I have put the pinyin version in parentheses only at the first use of the word. My goal has been to make this accessible and understandable not only to China scholars but also to those who have not had experience with the Chinese language or its various forms of Romanization

INTRODUCTION

America's involvement in the ongoing Chinese Civil War led to U.S. involvement in what has become known as the Taiwan Strait or Offshore Island crises. Although direct U.S. involvement in the conflict was minimal – Eisenhower limited it to supporting some Nationalist Chinese evacuation operations – the United States was preparing to become directly involved in the conflict and, thus, go to war with Communist China. America's indirect involvement in the conflict – principally in the form of American aid to Taiwan and the movement of American air and naval forces to the area – led to increased tensions between the U.S. and Communist China. U.S. aid to Taiwan and U.S. forces in the Taiwan Strait area were designed to counter Chinese Communist airpower. American involvement in the Taiwan Strait Crises was disproportionate to Chinese Communist air strength. America overestimated the Chinese Communist air force. America did so primarily because images and ideas of China imbedded in American culture led Americans to interpret information regarding the Chinese Communist air force in particular ways.

Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi), the leader of the Chinese Nationalists and an American ally, retreated to Taiwan (Formosa) in 1949 when the Chinese Communists defeated his forces. The Nationalists controlled not only Taiwan but also a number of other smaller island groups off the Chinese coast to include the Quemoy (Jinmen) Islands,

the Matsu (Mazu) Islands, and the Dachen Islands, all of which were less than fifty miles from the Chinese coast (See Appendix A). Chiang's retreat to Taiwan did not resolve the Chinese civil war, and both the Nationalists and Communists were bent on unifying China under their own power. In 1949, however, Mao Zedong's forces, although strong, were unable to project their power beyond the mainland to the offshore islands or to Taiwan and other relatively distant Nationalist strongholds, as illustrated by the failure of the 1949 Communist attempt to take the main island in the Quemoy group, Big Quemoy. During the Korean War, Mao's forces, the People's Liberation Army, modernized with Soviet aid. While engaged in Korea Mao had to postpone any attempts to take the offshore islands and Taiwan, but at the same time was able to capitalize on Soviet arms and training to develop forces that could fight beyond the mainland.

Once the Korean War ended, Mao again focused on unifying China and thus on Taiwan and the offshore islands. The People's Liberation Army began to bombard Quemoy with artillery fire on 3 September 1954.¹ Although the highest officials in the Chinese Communist Party (Mao, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi, and others) did not view the shelling as a momentous event, their counterparts in America (President Eisenhower and his principal advisors) did view the shelling as a serious threat to American interests (Taiwan) and, thus, as a crisis. Although the United States had left Taiwan out of previous Asian and Pacific alliances, on 5 December 1954, in response to the shelling of Quemoy, it signed a mutual defense agreement with Taiwan. The mutual defense agreement stated that the United States would oppose an armed attack on Taiwan or the Pescadores (Penghu). The agreement did not, however, include any statements regarding

¹ The offshore islands in question, those islands that comprise the Quemoy, Matsu, and Dachen groups, were all well within the range of mainland artillery.

American commitment to the offshore islands. Indeed, the ambiguity regarding the offshore islands was partly intentional – Eisenhower thought that the ambiguity would deter the Chinese Communists from attacking the offshore islands and the Nationalists from provoking an attack – and partly because the United States had a difficult time deciding whether it was necessary or worthwhile to defend any or all of the offshore islands. Gambling that the United States would not intervene in an attack on one of the farthest north and least defensible islands, Mao ordered the People's Liberation Army, and its air and sea components, to launch an amphibious assault. On 18 January 1955 PLA forces assaulted and soon overwhelmed the Nationalist garrison on Yijiangshan (in what remains to this date the largest combined arms operation in PLA history). After U.S. prodding and with U.S. help Chiang evacuated the other northern islands, the Dachens, on 12 February 1955. Ultimately, the Dachens were nearly indefensible because of their distance from Taiwan and their proximity to the Chinese mainland. Due to the American response to the Yijiangshan campaign and continuing American misperceptions of Chinese actions, tensions increased during February and March 1955. The Crisis continued until late April 1955 when Zhou Enlai made peace overtures at the Bandung conference and the Eisenhower administration reciprocated.²

² For more detailed coverage of the 1954-5 Taiwan Strait Crisis see: Gordon H. Chang and He Di, "The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence?" *American Historical Review* 98 (December 1993): 1500-1524; Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 163-70; Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 189-224; Leonard H. D. Gordon, "United States Opposition to Use of Force in the Taiwan Strait, 1954-1962," *Journal of American History* 72 (December 1985): 637-60; Thomas E. Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands: Together with an Implication for Outer Mongolia and Sino-Soviet Relations* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1985), 35-113; O. Edmund Clubb, "Formosa and the Offshore Islands in American Policy, 1950-1955," *Political Science Quarterly* 74 (December 1959): 517-31; Chao Ching, "A General Review of the Chinese Communist Artillery Shellings on Kinmen and Matsu during the Past Decade," *Issues and Studies* 2 (July 1966): 20-4. The citation for each book or article will be given in full the first time it appears, subsequent citations for the same book or article will include only

Although the Communists continued to shell Quemoy and Matsu after April 1955, the period from 1955 to 1958 was a time of relative peace in the Strait. On 23 August 1958, however, the Communists again began to shell the Offshore islands, and in doing so began the second Taiwan Strait Crisis.³ The 1954-5 bombardment paled in comparison to the short but intense 1958 bombardment. The American military buildup in the Strait (including aircraft carriers and USAF jet fighter squadrons) was also impressive. Although the U.S. commitment to Quemoy and Matsu remained ambiguous throughout August, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles announced on 4 September 1958 that effectively, the United States would defend Quemoy and Matsu from Communist assault. After extensive political, diplomatic, and military maneuvering on both sides, Beijing began to ease tensions in October 1958 and, although suspicions persisted, the crisis ended in October.⁴

the (first) author's surname, shortened title, publication date, and page number; article citations will also include shortened journal title. In order to aid further research and minimize confusion archival documents have been noted in full throughout this paper.

³ Scholars have disputed why Mao began to heavily shell the offshore islands in August 1958. Melvin Gurtov argues that American actions in the Middle East led China to attack the islands. Thomas Christensen argues that the Chinese domestic politics led Mao to attack the islands. Chen Jian argues that both international developments and politics (to include the Middle East Crisis) and domestic politics led Mao to begin the 1958 Crisis. Melvin Gurtov, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis Revisited: Politics and Foreign Policy in Chinese Motives, *Modern China* 2 (January 1976): 49-103 (this article is also reprinted in Melvin Gurtov and Byong-Moo Hwang, *China under Threat*).

⁴ For more information regarding the 1958 crisis see the following: Gurtov, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis Revisited," *Modern China* 2 (January 1976): 49-103; Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 2001, 171-204; Gordon, "United States Opposition to Use of Force in the Taiwan Strait, 1954-1962," *JAH* 72 (December 1985): 637-60; Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 194-241; Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, vol. 2, *The Great Leap Forward, 1958-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 92-100; Chao, "A General Review of the Chinese Communist Artillery Shellings," *Issues and Studies* 2 (July 1966): 20-4; Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*, 1992, 225-267; Morton H. Halperin and Tang Tsou, "The 1958 Quemoy Crisis," in *Sino-Soviet Relations and Arms Control*, ed. Morton H. Halperin (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1967), 265-304.

During both crises Communist shelling was accompanied by sporadic air and naval clashes. Although from the American perspective a massing of Chinese Communist naval forces across the strait from any of the offshore islands was the sure sign of an impending amphibious assault, the massing of air forces was the most dangerous situation. While the Communist bombardment provided the spark that ignited the conflict, it was the actions of the Chinese Communist air force that was the fuel for the fire. Eisenhower had commanded the largest amphibious assault in history, and many of his advisors had observed or participated in World War II amphibious operations; these men recognized that he who controls the air also controls the surface. If the Chinese Communists gained air superiority over the Strait they then could invade the offshore islands or Taiwan. From the middle of the first Taiwan Strait Crisis and through the second crisis, Eisenhower and his administration, military officers, and the American media thought that the Chinese Communist Air Force had the capability to seize air superiority over the Strait at any moment.

Air engagements over the strait and over the Chinese mainland told a different story, however. During the 1954-1955 crisis the People's Liberation Army Air Force participated in the Yijiangshan campaign. Writing in 1995, RAND Corporation scholars and China experts Kenneth Allen, Glenn Krumel and Jonathan Pollack state that prior to the campaign the Chinese Communist air force had no experience with combined operations, and throughout the operation it lacked the capability to hit hardened targets and had little experience or capability of flying over water or in bad weather.⁵ The Chinese Communists lost nineteen aircraft during the operation and displayed poor

⁵ Kenneth W. Allen, Glenn Krumel, Jonathan D. Pollack, *China's Air Force Enters the 21st Century* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1995), 59.

bombing skills.⁶ The performance of the Chinese Communists led scholars Gordon Chang and He Di to conclude, "The January 1955 assault on Yijiangshan Island, a small, vulnerable target related to the Dachen, taxed China's amphibious capabilities to the limit and required the largest combined force operation to date in Chinese Communist history. The Communists posed no military threat, either in immediate intention or capability, to Taiwan."⁷ Ultimately, due to the position of the islands and the political position of the United States, the PLA managed to take the islands despite the lack of adequate air support.

Although the Chinese Communists made a point of improving their airfields in Fujian province and the logistical infrastructure to those airfields in the intervening years between the two crises, they lacked sufficient supply or logistics to allow them to capitalize on their massive air force during the 1958 crisis. In 1958 the Chinese Communists possessed two key advantages over the Nationalists: overwhelming numerical superiority in the Fujian coastal area (which includes Quemoy and Matsu), and possession of Russian-built MiG-17s, which was a more advanced jet in many ways than the Nationalists' American-built F-86s. Despite these advantages the Communists were unable to prevent Nationalist overflights of the mainland. Further, the Chinese Nationalists probably established a very favorable kill ratio over the Communists. Although both the U.S. and Nationalist figures are still disputed by the People's Republic

⁶ Allen, et al. *China's Air Force Enters the 21st Century*, 1995, 60-1.

⁷ Chang and He, "The Absence of War," *AHR* 98 (December 1993): 1510-1.

of China, American scholars have accepted a kill ratio of eight to one in the Nationalists' favor.⁸

Although Mao Zedong recognized the weaknesses of his large air force and realized that it could pose little threat to U.S. air forces, Americans thought that it was a serious threat to American interests in the Far East, particularly Taiwan, the Pescadores, and especially Quemoy and Matsu.⁹ During the 1950s Americans analyzing the Chinese Communist air force had some very good data available to them. Like the RAND scholars, Americans in the 1950s knew of Chinese logistical, supply, and economic problems. In addition, based on available data regarding Chinese Communist performance in the Korean War and the Taiwan Strait crises, Americans could have deduced that Communist China's airmen (pilots, navigators, and maintainers) were poorly trained. Although Americans had access to and made use of good data, Americans overestimated the Chinese Communist air force. Americans miscalculated primarily because Americans prejudged the Chinese Communist air force using images and ideas of the Chinese imbedded in American culture. Some of these ideas and images had been part of American culture since American independence, some had developed during America's nearly two hundred year history prior to the Taiwan Strait Crises, and some developed because of the Communist victory in China in 1949 and the Chinese Communist intervention in Korea in 1950. These ideas and images and their history will be explored in Chapter one.

⁸ Allen, et al. *China's Air Force Enters the 21st Century*, 1995, 67-9.

⁹ Chang and He, "The Absence of War," *AHR* 98 (December 1993): 1510.

Chapters two, three, and four are devoted to examining what Americans wrote about the Chinese Communist air force during the period between 1954 and 1958. The media was responsible for bringing news and information regarding the Chinese Communist air force to the public. The public discourse regarding the Chinese Communist air force was conducted primarily in newspapers and in magazines and its participants were members of the press. It appears that the general public did not actively think about the Chinese Communist air force or, if they did, they did not leave any record of their thoughts, thus members of the press were the only Americans involved in the public conversation regarding the Chinese Communist air force. Although the media presented reports of numerous Nationalist victories, they stressed the strength of the Chinese Communist air force, often invoking images of China that resonated with American ideas of China. The media left the public with the distinct idea that the Chinese Communist air force was a threat to the Nationalists and to American interests in the Far East while at the same time running articles, often buried deep in the day's paper, recounting Nationalist victories.

The military was not unaffected. Military officers, especially air officers, had the greatest information regarding the Chinese Communist air force and the best understanding of military operations and the factors impacting those operations. Many American military officers overestimated the Chinese Communist air force despite reports of Chinese logistical and supply problems. In fact, it was in the writings about the Chinese Communist air force by military men that images and ideas of the Chinese from American culture were most prevalent.

The imagery present in the discourse among military officers was noticeably absent, however, at the highest levels of government. Eisenhower and his senior civilian military advisors did overestimate the Chinese air force; this is borne out in their words and actions. Although why they did so is unclear, it seems probable that American images and ideas played a role in the Administration's overestimation of the Chinese Communist air force as well.

While these three groups, the media – military officers, and the Administration or policy-makers – have been clearly defined for this thesis, in reality these groups experienced tremendous interaction and often the lines between the groups were blurred. They influenced one another tremendously. Military officers prepared reports that their commanders then handed to the President or cabinet members. The administration's opinions and actions were reported and interpreted in the media, and military officers, as part of the American public, read and were influenced by the media. It is imperative to remember that while it is useful to analysis to delineate some distinct groups, the distinction is inevitably artificial and the reality was more blurred.

Answering how and why Americans overestimated the Chinese Communist air force leads to numerous other answers. First, this study will provide insight into American decisions during the Taiwan Strait Crises. Principally, Eisenhower avoided the use of force in the Strait because of his fear that the force necessary to attain victory in the face of the Chinese air force would be too great. The administration's principal concern was that the United States, in order to defeat the Chinese Communist air force, would have to use nuclear weapons which would result in prohibitive collateral damage (especially in the form of Chinese civilian casualties) and political fallout. Second, this

thesis will examine the role that culture played in intelligence analysis. Ultimately, although America had intelligence, much of it accurate, regarding the Chinese Communists, the intelligence required interpreting. It was during this interpretive process that American images and ideas of China entered the equation. Finally, this study provides insight into how Americans still view the last powerful communist nation. Americans have displayed a continuing tendency to overestimate the Chinese Communists and their air force. The history of this process began in the aftermath of the Korean War, that is, during the Taiwan Strait Crisis.

Although I made extensive use of archival materials from the Eisenhower Presidential Library, the National Archives II, and the Air Force Historical Research Agency, I have inevitably left some sources unexamined. It would be useful for future research to examine the papers of Nathan F. Twining (located at the Library of Congress), who was Air Force Chief of Staff during the first crisis and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the second. Also important, but to a lesser extent, are the papers of Omar N. Bradley (also at the Library of Congress). Further examination of Eisenhower's personal reminiscences and papers would have yielded more insight into how that important (and impressive) man viewed the Chinese. Also, while I have made use of the microfiche supplement to Volume nineteen of the *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*, I was unable to locate or make use of the print volume which contains important information. Finally, much information regarding this subject is still classified; some questions will only be answered after further declassification.

CHAPTER 1

THE YELLOW REDS

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Rigg, a U.S. Army officer who had served in China as an observer during the Chinese Civil War, in his 1951 book called the Chinese People's Liberation Army "Red China's Ochre Hordes." "Red China's Ochre Hordes" was both a name and a description, and the description typified American thoughts on the Chinese Communists and on the Chinese Communist armed forces from 1949 through the end of the 1950s. Rigg's description incorporated three key elements – the color red invoking ideas of the Soviet Union and communism, ochre invoking images and ideas of the Chinese "yellow peril," and, finally, the term "hordes" conjuring up images of Genghis Khan's feared armies. Rigg's book is ultimately the product of American culture and of the changing American perceptions of China and the Chinese. Although Rigg was an insightful military analyst, he was also tremendously influenced by the culture of which he was a part and as a result his analysis of China's military is colored by the events and ideas that shaped American perceptions of the Chinese in the 1950s. Ideas such as Rigg's ultimately lay behind Americans' thinking about the Chinese Communist air force and their expectations for its success.

Just before Rigg published *Red China's Fighting Hordes* American attitudes toward China changed dramatically as a result of America's "loss of China" in 1949 and

the Chinese intervention in Korea in 1950. American attitudes, and Western attitudes in general, toward China and the Chinese had already taken a number of twists and turns prior to the trauma caused by the "loss of China." Until 1949 American attitudes toward China were based on a number of well-established ideas regarding China, the Chinese, and "Orientals" in general. American ideas of China and the Chinese were often conflicting, sometimes directly contradictory, and usually poorly founded. Many ideas of China have coexisted in American minds despite their conflicting nature. While one set of ideas may be dominant at any given time, other conflicting and contradictory ideas are still present in American thought but latent.¹ The range of ideas regarding the Chinese and China and the poor factual foundation of many of those ideas allowed Americans to easily change their attitude toward China and its people.

American ideas about China were also part of a larger set of American ideas of and attitudes toward what Americans called the "Orient." In American minds, according to Edward Said, "Oriental" people were all very similar. Attributes that Americans or Westerners had assigned to one Oriental people could easily be transferred to another. Thus, Americans could, and indeed did, transfer ideas of Mongol military prowess to the Chinese or concepts of Chinese technological backwardness to the Japanese or Koreans.²

Although American and Western ideas of China were generally fluid and flexible some early Western ideas regarding China remained constant, at least until the traumatic

¹ Harold Isaacs, *Scratches on our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York: The John Day Company, 1958), 63-4. Isaacs argues that there are only two sets of American ideas regarding the Chinese, a Chinese set which is largely positive and a Mongolian set which is largely negative.

² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), 23; Harold Isaacs, *Scratches on our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York: The John Day Company, 1958), 225-7; Jonathan D. Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 97.

events of 1949 and 1950. For Westerners, images of military weakness and technological incapacity had defined the Chinese for hundreds of years. America's "loss of China" and the Chinese performance in the Korean War shattered these age-old concepts. In a testament to both the extreme trauma caused by the events of 1949 and 1950 and the Western ability to quickly transfer ideas about one Oriental group to another, Americans quickly replaced old ideas of Chinese technical incompetence and military inaptitude with ideas and images of technical and military prowess. Also impressive and stable is the image of the massive population and manpower of China, an idea which has become more powerful over time but the implications of which have changed with each shift in Western culture. Because of their constancy, images of Chinese manpower, technical incapacity, and military weakness were more powerful and harder to destroy than more fluid concepts of the Chinese.

Ultimately, the determining factor in the American attitude toward China at any given time was often neither careful scholarship nor insightful foreign policy. American ideas of China were usually based on few facts. Instead, as Robert McClellan argued in *The Heathen Chinese*, American attitudes toward China and the Chinese were determined by what Americans wanted to believe about the Chinese.³ Often, outside forces such as economics, domestic politics, or international relations had a greater impact on American attitudes toward the Chinese than any facts about the Chinese.

American ideas of China have their roots in much older European ideas of China. Marco Polo's *Travels* still influences how Americans think about China. The earliest Westerners who traveled to and wrote about China generally praised China and its

³ Robert McClellan, *The Heathen Chinese: A Study of American Attitudes toward China, 1890-1905* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971), xiii.

civilization. Marco Polo was among the first Europeans to write about China, but perhaps more important is another European, the Jesuit Matteo Ricci, who lived in China in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and wrote extensively about Chinese civilization. Ricci spent more time in China and wrote more about China than Marco Polo. Jonathan Spence, noted student of China and Western images of China, describes the favorable qualities that Ricci and the other early China observers found in Chinese civilization: "China offered a picture of a vast, unified, well-ordered country, held together by a central controlling orthodoxy, that of Confucianism."⁴

While early European accounts of China generally emphasized the greatness of Chinese civilization, they also sowed the seed of Western ideas of Chinese inferiority. Changes in Western intellectual trends led Westerners during the Enlightenment to criticize China rather than praise it. The French philosopher Montesquieu, for example, faulted many of the same characteristics of Chinese civilization that Matteo Ricci had praised. Montesquieu criticized the Chinese form of government and the Chinese ruler, stating that both lacked any virtue and instead ruled by fear. Montesquieu also criticized Confucianism, the dominant Chinese religion, which Ricci and others had found so attractive.⁵ Montesquieu was representative of his time, and others such as the novelist Daniel Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, were equally critical of China.⁶

⁴ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent: China in Western Minds* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 33.

⁵ When Montesquieu and his contemporaries discussed Confucianism they regarded it as a religion, thus I have chosen to use that characterization of Confucianism in this text. Today, however, the majority of China scholars is in agreement that Confucianism is a philosophy, not a religion. Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, 1998, 88-95; James C. Thomson, Jr., Peter W. Stanley, and John Curtis Perry, *Sentimental Imperialists: The American Experience in East Asia* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), 8

⁶ Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, 1998, 66-8.

Constants in Western perceptions were as important as changing perceptions to the foundation of American ideas of China. Ideas of Chinese military weakness, Chinese technological backwardness, and China's immense manpower were among the earliest Western ideas of China. Europe's most famous China observer, Marco Polo, created one of the most important images attributed to the Chinese – the militarily weak Mandarin.⁷ Later China watchers made similar observations, citing both problems with China's military defenses and Chinese culture as causes for military incapacity. Jonathan Spence summarizes the thoughts of George Anson, an eighteenth century British naval officer, which are exemplary of the Western image of the Chinese military:

Anson was brief and dismissive about the Chinese military defenses that he observed around Canton, and noted sardonically that even the 'armor' the Chinese wore with such display was not of steel but made from 'a particular kind of glittering paper.' As a result of the 'cowardice of the inhabitants, and the want of proper military regulations,' China was doomed 'not only to the attempts of any potent State but to the ravages of every petty invader.'⁸

Anson was also critical of Chinese industry and he found the Chinese lacking in creative skills.⁹ Although Anson's perception of Chinese industry has been important to Western perceptions of China, it was Voltaire, a French philosopher and contemporary of Anson, who firmly established Western ideas about Chinese technological backwardness and incapacity or at least technological stagnation. Particularly important was Voltaire's thought that, as Spence put it, "China had failed to develop to its fullest potential a single

⁷ Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, 1998, 3.

⁸ Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, 1998, 54.

⁹ Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, 1998, 54.

one of the great inventions to which its people could lay claim in the recesses of the past.”¹⁰

More powerful than ideas of Chinese military weakness or Chinese technological stagnation were ideas and images of the vast Chinese population. Marco Polo commented on the colossal size of China, and others who followed also commented on China’s huge population. No idea of China has been more consistent and more powerful in the West. Harold Isaacs, a noted sinologist and professor at MIT, writing in 1958 stated: “The one thing everybody knows about the Chinese is that there is a fantastically large number of them.”¹¹ Although Isaacs was writing about American images of China in the 1950s, he accurately summarized an image of China that had persisted in Western minds for hundreds of years. Not only had the idea of China’s hordes been a fixture in European thoughts on China since the days of Marco Polo, but it remained the single most constant and powerful image in American perceptions of China.

Already before the independence of the United States there were numerous and conflicting ideas and images of China. Often an author’s attitude toward China was based more on the public attitude rather than on the available information (as was the case with Defoe).¹² The Western understanding of China was problematic. Because there were few Western China “experts,” only a small number of whom had actually traveled to China, and still fewer who had lived in China long enough to gain an understanding of Chinese civilization, few original ideas regarding China were well

¹⁰ Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent*, 1998, 97.

¹¹ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 99.

¹² Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent*, 1998, 66.

supported. Further, the situation was not getting much better. Although Sino-Western contact had increased since the time of Marco Polo, contact was still extremely limited. There was still a paucity of information regarding China available to Westerners. Another problem with Western scholarship regarding China was that careful analysis and careful research or observation rarely coincided. As with Montesquieu, Defoe, and others, those who attempted to analyze China did so only through what scholars today would consider secondary sources, and more often than not the sources available were extremely poor. Spence points out that the accounts by Marco Polo, Matteo Ricci, and others often included exaggerations, second-hand stories, and pure fictions. Further, the published information regarding China was superficial and rarely adequately addressed subjects on which Montesquieu or other scholars or novelists would focus. Instead, Montesquieu and others were free to interpret what little superficial information was available. With such a poor picture of China these scholars developed numerous theories, interpretations, and ideas regarding the country.

This was the confused state of Western knowledge and thoughts about China when the United States declared its independence from Britain. America's cultural and intellectual heritage left the new nation with a number of important ideas regarding China. Matteo Ricci and other early observers established ideas of Chinese greatness, and Americans inherited a sense of reverence for China's ancient and great civilization. On the other hand, because of men like Montesquieu, Americans also held a feeling of superiority over the Chinese due to ideas of Chinese inferiority and China's heathen nature. Although Western thought regarding China had already shown a propensity for change, there were also important, powerful constants in Western perceptions of China;

Americans inherited these ideas as well. Voltaire's concept of Chinese technological stagnation, Anson's idea of China's military weakness, and the nearly ubiquitous idea of China's enormous size and population remained constant in American, as well as European, thought.¹³

To be sure, few early Americans thought anything at all about the Chinese. Those who did think about China, such as New York merchants and Boston intellectuals, had little factual knowledge of the Chinese, and their conceptions of the Chinese were definite but also very abstract. Even the leading statesmen of the new republic, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, knew almost nothing of substance about the Chinese.¹⁴ Only a mere handful of American merchants and missionaries had any contact with China. American interest in China, however, grew steadily. America, a Protestant and capitalist society, sought new converts and new markets – and the huge Chinese population seemed to offer both potential converts and potential markets; as sinologist Harold Isaacs stated, it was “the dream of 400,000,000 customers [and converts]!”¹⁵

Only a few Americans were in China in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, but American attitudes toward China are evidenced by actions of the small contingent of merchants and missionaries. The attitudes of the American merchants and missionaries in China were important in shaping American attitudes toward the Chinese. The missionaries were overwhelmingly well intentioned. There was, however, a sense of

¹³ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 64-7.

¹⁴ Thomson et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 5-7.

¹⁵ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 68

superiority and condescension inherent in missionary attitudes and actions.¹⁶ Merchants held similar attitudes toward the Chinese as their missionary countrymen. They felt that the Chinese civilization was inferior to American and Western civilization. Merchants and missionaries alike viewed the Chinese as “strange and unattractive” but they also believed that China was a land of opportunity.¹⁷

Although many merchants and missionaries had a contemptuous view of the Chinese in the early 1800s, Harold Isaacs has accurately defined the period until the 1840s as the American “Age of Respect” toward China.¹⁸ Merchants and missionaries were leading public opinion, however. By the mid-1800s Chinese began to arrive in California in large numbers. The arrival of large numbers of Chinese emigrants in the United States ushered in a new era in American ideas of China and attitudes toward both China and its people. Until the mid 1800s China and the Chinese were abstract ideas for most Americans. During the mid and late 1800s the number of Americans who had contact with Chinese increased dramatically from a handful of missionaries and merchants to much of the population of the West coast.¹⁹ Chinese immigration served to heighten American interest in China and the Chinese, and it also served to alter American attitudes toward the Chinese.

High wages and plentiful jobs attracted the Chinese, whose native land was suffering from economic troubles. The Chinese who came to the U.S. did not intend to stay permanently – the coauthors of *Sentimental Imperialists* call these Chinese émigrés

¹⁶ Thomson, et al. *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 58.

¹⁷ Thomson, et al. *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 13

¹⁸ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 71.

¹⁹ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 81; McClellan, *Heathen Chinese*, 1971, xi.

“sojourners.”²⁰ The intention to return to their families in China determined how the Chinese acted in the United States. The Chinese immigrants, most of whom were men, sent their earnings back to their families in China. Further, the Chinese in America had little intention to abandon their native culture and adopt the American culture. In the mid 1800s, nevertheless, the American West needed the Chinese to provide labor, and while Americans did not like the Chinese they accepted the Chinese labor.

Initially, Americans welcomed or, at least, tolerated the Chinese “sojourners,” although not because of any love for the Chinese. Instead, Americans were happy to know that American railroads would be built more quickly. There was plenty of work in America during the mid-1800s and the Chinese were willing to take jobs that Americans didn’t want.²¹ Tolerance of the Chinese immigrants did not, however, last long.

Neither their economic and social intentions nor their cultural or physical difference initially endeared the Chinese to Americans, but when America’s economy took a turn for the worse Americans became hostile toward the Chinese. By the 1870s the economic conditions that created the labor shortage of the 1840s and 1850s had ended and there was no longer any need for Chinese in America – at least that’s what many whites thought. Racist thought was common among white Americans, especially by today’s standards and notably in California, where most of the Chinese in America lived. With the end of the labor shortage, there was no reason to keep the Chinese (and other Asians) off the list of undesirables, which already included Blacks, Mexicans, and American Indians. To support their racist attitudes Californians, and Americans in

²⁰ Thomson, et al. *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 83.

²¹ McClellan, *Heathen Chinese*, 1971, 4-6; Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent*, 1998, 122-3; Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 81-2.

general, relied not only on their own contact with Chinese but also on a number of other sources. Ideas presented in European accounts of the Chinese were full of facts that Americans interpreted as they wished. More accessible were American merchant and missionary accounts of China and its people. Most of the American merchants and missionaries were contemptuous of the Chinese and their ways and thus, the American public had to interpret little. Finally, many Americans opposed Chinese immigration because most Chinese who came to the United States in the nineteenth century arrived as indentured laborers indebted to and controlled by the merchants and labor contractors who had advanced the money for their passage across the Pacific. For many Americans, this form of unfree labor was reminiscent of the slave system that had been abolished by the Civil War of 1861-1865.²²

Contempt for the Chinese led Americans to enact a number of laws that legalized discrimination against the Chinese and restricted immigration and naturalization of the Chinese. Some very vocal Americans were determined to stop the "yellow peril," that is, the flood of heathen Chinese or Mongol hordes which with such great numbers was widely expected to take over the United States. American images of the "yellow peril" were based in part on American ideas of the enormous Chinese population. Although the enormous population had represented positive images (a huge market and the possibility for many converts) earlier in American history, Americans were able to twist the idea of Chinese population into something threatening. The other key aspect of the "yellow peril" was the appointment of certain Mongolian characteristics to the Chinese. In one of the best examples of how Westerners could transfer characteristics from one Oriental

²² Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 84-90.

people to another, Americans began frequently to use the words “Chinese” and “Mongol” interchangeably, even to the point where the term “Mongolian” came to define Chinese people in American legal cases. Americans considered the Mongols an extremely unattractive people.²³ The use of the term served to convince people who had no contact with Chinese of their unattractive qualities. The use of the word “Mongolian” to describe the Chinese also illustrates the American contempt and disrespect for the Chinese during the late 1800s.

“The Age of Contempt,” as Harold Isaacs described it, lasted until the turn of the century. Notable events such as the American acquisition of Hawaii and the Philippines combined with a change in American opinion toward overseas expansion to increase the importance of Asia in American minds. American commercial and religious interests in Asia also grew. Further, the number of Chinese in America declined and with the immigration exclusion laws in place there was no longer much fear of the “yellow Chinese hordes” taking control of the United States.²⁴ With the Chinese back in China – where Americans believed Chinese belonged – and with increased American interest in China, American attitudes toward China and the Chinese changed with great rapidity.

No American act better represents American attitudes toward the Chinese during the early 1900s than the Open Door. The Open Door consisted of two separate events which have acted together in American minds ever since. In 1899, in an effort to protect American commercial interests in China from European colonialism, Secretary of State John Hay sent a series of diplomatic notes, the first Open Door notes, to each of the

²³ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 88-90; Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, 1998, 141.

²⁴ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 90.

Imperial powers in China requesting equal trading rights within each power's sphere of influence. The second Open Door note followed shortly thereafter when, in 1899, anti-Western sentiment sparked the Boxer uprising.²⁵ The uprising directly threatened American citizens in China and also indirectly threatened American interests in China by providing any one of the European imperial powers a pretext for taking control of China and terminating other nations' trading rights. Faced with a threat to American interests and American citizens (and an election year), President McKinley was determined to act. The second Open Door note, far from being a request, was an announcement of American intentions. The note stated that the United States intended to unilaterally enter China with a military force to restore order, protect Open Door trade, uphold international law, and, most importantly for American attitudes toward China, to maintain China as a State.²⁶

Although the notes did have considerable impact on international relations, the impact on the American public was even greater. Americans came to regard and support the Open Door notes as an ongoing American policy to defend China. The notes never laid out such a policy but fiction became more powerful than fact, especially with some backing from State Department officials.²⁷

The nature of America's self-perceived benevolence toward China was solidified with the second Open Door note. The American religious community in China harbored similar feelings toward the Chinese. While missionaries still regarded the Chinese as

²⁵ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 126-7

²⁶ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 131.

²⁷ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 121-31.

inferior, they also began to feel some responsibility and perhaps some affection for the Chinese. No longer were they trying to convert and teach the Chinese only to serve God; instead the missionaries were trying to serve both the Chinese and God. Robert McClellan, author of *The Heathen Chinese*, described this transition best saying, "In the years before 1890 and in the early years of that decade, the Chinese were most often pictured as debased immoral creatures in desperate need of Christian salvation. Gradually, however, the emphasis on their degraded state began to give way to an increased emphasis on the promise which they offered when changed by conversion to Christianity."²⁸

Americans began to express similar attitudes towards Chinese in America. Although federal law still prohibited Chinese from becoming citizens and the inertia of the exclusionary laws would continue until the 1940s, there was some sentiment building during the first decades of the twentieth century to relax the laws. The opposition to the immigration laws was not due to any respect for Chinese culture. Instead it was rooted in a belief in the superiority of American culture and the assumption that Chinese immigrants could and would cast off their own culture and accept that of the United States. Essentially, the thinking of those groups which opposed the immigration laws resembled the thoughts and practices of American missionaries in China. The American missionaries in China were trying to spread not only Christianity but also all of American culture. Indeed, many of the leaders of the groups that opposed the exclusionary laws were missionaries. The chief argument against the exclusionary laws was that the

²⁸ McClellan, *Heathen Chinese*, 1971, 134.

Chinese could become good Americans (i.e., they could accept American culture) if they lived in the U.S.²⁹

Economic hardship and then isolationism turned American eyes inward during the 1930s. American benevolence toward China was beginning to ebb as Americans refocused on domestic troubles and as Chinese revolutionaries turned against American missionaries.³⁰ Two events, however, led not only to continued American benevolence toward the Chinese but also to American admiration of the Chinese. First, Chiang Kai-shek came to control the national government of China. Second, Chiang Kai-shek and other Chinese resisted Japanese invasion.

Although he controlled the national government, Chiang's position was tenuous for four reasons. First, Chiang's military and political situation was poor. Despite being recognized by most foreign powers as the leader of China, Chiang and his Nationalist Party (Guomindang; GMD) controlled only a portion of China. Second, the portions of China that Chiang did not control were ruled by various warlords who continually rose up against Chiang in order to try to gain more power. Third, one of the key elements in the GMD's rise to power was the "United Front," which was an alliance between the GMD and the Chinese Communist Party. Chiang ended the "United Front" with an attack on the Chinese Communist Party in 1927. Fourth, the Japanese also threatened the stability of the Chiang's rule. Indeed, Chiang's rule was shaky at best.³¹

²⁹ Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 19-26.

³⁰ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 173-5.

³¹ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 176-80.

Chiang, despite his weak position, amazingly gained American support. His opposition to Communism and to the Japanese was attractive to many Americans. What really sold America on Chiang, however, was his marriage to the younger sister of Madame Sun Yat-Sen (Sun Zhongshan). Madame Sun's sister, Soong Mei-ling (Song Meiling), was a Christian and American educated. Soon after their marriage, Chiang converted to Methodism, his wife's denomination. The missionary groups, which had been so important in influencing the American opinion of China, were relieved and pleased to find Chiang, a Christian, in power. Although anti-Western and anti-Christian sentiment had been simmering (and occasionally boiling over as was the case with the Boxer uprising) in China for decades, Chiang's ascension to power and his conversion to Christianity were promising to American missionaries. American foundations, notably the Rockefeller Foundation, began to financially support Chiang and the GMD. With some American educated Chinese in positions of power and an American-friendly Chiang in the seat of power, the United States felt that it could indeed shape China's destiny. American benevolence was saved.³²

American benevolence toward China and the Chinese easily changed to American admiration as Japanese aggression spread through China and Asia in general. Japanese-American economic and military competition and disagreements had led to American ill feelings toward the Japanese. Further, the American public still thought of the United States as the protector of the Chinese because of the Open Door. While the Open Door continued to engender in Americans a somewhat paternal feeling toward the Chinese, it also established an American policy of minimal involvement. The odd combination of

³² Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 180; Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 161-2.

paternal benevolence and minimal involvement was due to the difference between the myth and reality of the Open Door notes. The Open Door notes had been more of a clever bluff to secure Chinese sovereignty than active intervention on the behalf of the Chinese people or government. At the same time, however, Americans came to believe that the Open Door notes had guaranteed Chinese sovereignty. Thus, while America lent moral support to Chiang Kai-shek and the anti-Japanese resistance in China, it provided little material, monetary, or military support until America's own entry into the war.

Once the United States entered the war against Japan it began to send aid to China. America sent increased supplies to retired Air Corps officer Claire Chennault's group of volunteer American fighter pilots in China officially called the American Volunteer Group (AVG) but popularly known as the Flying Tigers. The United States also sent Army General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell to advise Chiang Kai-shek and to command Allied forces in the newly created China-Burma-India theater. Finally, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared that China would be a great power when the war ended, despite the fact that China had not been a great power since the early 1800s and had been in continuous revolution since the turn of the century.³³ The outbreak of war with Japan, the perceived importance of China and the CBI theater, and the attraction of colorful characters such as Chennault and "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell caused a significant increase in American interest in China and "put China on the map" for many Americans. By the end of the war neither the Chinese nor China were abstract ideas for Americans.³⁴

³³ Ross Y. Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics*, with an introduction by Richard C. Kagan, ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), 9 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

³⁴ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 164-176.

The change in American interest in understanding China was matched by the change in the American attitude toward China and its people. Impressed by Chinese resistance to the Japanese in 1937, Americans began to admire the Chinese. Important to the change in the American attitude toward China during this period were both missionaries and those connected with missionaries and mass media. Author, missionary daughter and wife, and Nobel laureate Pearl Buck wrote extensively and with admiration about the Chinese peasants. Her novels were so popular that a movie studio turned her most famous work, *The Good Earth*, into a film. Buck's *The Good Earth* had tremendous impact on American perceptions of the Chinese. In his 1958 study of American images of China, Harold Isaacs cites Pearl Buck's novels and her movie as being among the most influential forces on American images of the Chinese.³⁵ Also, *Time* publisher and missionary son Henry Luce began to use his magazine and also movies, specifically *The March of Time* documentaries, to champion the cause of the Chinese.³⁶

While World War II solidified American admiration for the Chinese and support for Chiang, it was also the first step in a chain reaction that would ultimately lead to catastrophe in 1949. World War II had important effects in China and in the United States. First, the war established a pattern of significant American involvement with and aid to the Nationalists in monetary, military, and political arenas.³⁷ Second, it set the

³⁵ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 120; Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 188.

³⁶ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 59, 188-9.

³⁷ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 222-3.

stage for the emergence of what Ross Koen has termed "The China Lobby."³⁸ Not a lobby in the usual sense, the "China Lobby" was a group of Chinese who supported Chiang and a group of Americans, mostly Republicans, who endeavored to use the "loss of China" as a means for crippling the Democratic Party and for strengthening their own position in domestic politics.³⁹ World War II also launched the Soviet-American conflict that would last until the 1990s but was most heated during the early postwar period. Fourth, although Chinese resistance to the Japanese earned the Chinese and Chiang America's admiration it also revealed many of the problems in Chiang's Nationalist government. While Chiang did little to improve his position in China during World War II, the Chinese Communists elevated themselves to a position where they threatened Chiang and the Nationalists as the most powerful and influential group in China.⁴⁰ Finally, World War II, particularly the Yalta Conference, established China as an American-Soviet battleground as both nations sought to exert their influence over the new "great power" in the closing months of World War II.

In the wake of World War II America maintained its ties with the Guomindang. Despite some evidence during the war that Chiang may not have been a strong leader or military commander, the U.S. continued to recognize Chiang as China's leader and supported his government with funds and arms. The strength and capability of the Chinese Communists and the ineptitude of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek led to numerous Communist victories which caused Americans to lose confidence in Chiang.

³⁸ Koen, *The China Lobby*, 1960, 1-23.

³⁹ Richard C. Kagan, introduction to *The China Lobby in American Politics* by Ross Y. Koen (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), ix-xi (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁴⁰ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 218-220.

The Truman Administration began to limit the aid to Chiang.⁴¹ Simultaneously, however, Chiang's American supporters, notably Henry Luce and some Republican congressmen, and his Chinese supporters in America, especially T. V. Soong (Song Ziwen) and H. H. Kung (Kong Xiangxi), began to lobby for Chiang in the American political arena and tried to garner support for Chiang from the American people. Chiang's supporters in the United States attempted to play on American fears of Communism, which only grew with each passing Soviet-American crisis through the late 1940s (e.g., the Berlin Airlift, the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, and the Communist insurgency in Greece). Increasingly, Chiang's supporters argued that important American China experts who influenced or made America's China policy had betrayed Chiang Kai-shek and thus caused Nationalist failures.⁴² With powerful elements in the American media (Luce), Chiang's many disparate supporters began to use the media to convince Americans that supporting Chiang was essential to supporting America and its ideals (especially democracy, freedom, and anti-communism). Further, the "China Lobby" used such rhetoric as an attack on Truman and the Democrats in an effort to persuade Truman to increase support to Chiang and to undercut Truman's political power in the United States, giving Republicans the upper hand in domestic politics.⁴³ Despite the fact that Stalin and Soviet Russia had provided Mao with little aid during the Chinese Communists' times of greatest need, many Americans began to equate Maoism with Stalinism. All of these

⁴¹ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 224-5;

⁴² Koen, *The China Lobby*, 1974, 13, 21.

⁴³ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 227-9.

elements converged in 1949 when it became clear to the American people that the Chinese had chosen communism over the American democratic and liberal ideals.

American historians and political analysts have asserted that Americans felt betrayed by the Chinese people; they have asserted that the “loss of China” is one of America’s great traumas; and East Asian experts Thomson, Stanley and Perry stated, “The intensity of American reaction to the victory of Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong] is difficult to recreate for those of a later generation. Even those who experienced it are sometimes baffled in retrospect.”⁴⁴ Indeed, today it seems odd that Americans should have reacted so violently to a change in government in a land so far away as China, especially since China had shown so little value as a trading partner despite all of American hopes; her population had been tremendously unreceptive to American culture and religion despite the best efforts of American missionaries. Moreover, looking back from the perspective of 1949, China had never posed a serious threat to American interests; any threat to American interests in China or Asia came from European powers in the area or from Chinese rebels – but never from the Chinese state which had lacked the ability to project force beyond its own coastal waters since the early fifteenth century. America’s “loss of China” has, however, played prominently in American Cold War history. The “loss of China” was a trauma and, like all traumas concerning China, the Communist victory in China changed the way America viewed China. The shift in the American attitude toward China, from positive to negative, was intensified and steeled when less than a year after Communist victory in China, Chinese troops overran American troops in Korea.

⁴⁴ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 217.

Although American attitudes toward China had shifted in the past, sometimes almost completely reversing, the shift between 1949 and 1950 was the most violent in the history of Sino-American relations. Americans quickly repressed, but did not eliminate, feelings of respect, admiration, or benevolence for the Chinese. In their place Americans revived old negative feelings.

Confused by the traumatic "loss of China," American feelings toward the Chinese in the 1950s were contradictory and puzzling. Americans dealt with feelings of extreme guilt. American guilt over the "loss of China" stemmed from America's Open Door myth which had engendered earlier feelings of American benevolence toward China and a belief that America was China's protector. Although American feelings of guilt had numerous effects (best detailed in Ross Y. Koen's controversial *The China Lobby in American Politics* and in Harold Isaacs's *Scratches on our Minds*) it is important to note here only that American guilt was strong and resulted in the act of finger pointing and assigning blame and was an important part of McCarthy's attacks on suspected communists or communist sympathizers.

The most powerful group in the debate over who exactly lost China was the "China Lobby." The "China Lobby" by this time included wealthy Chinese-Americans T. V. Soong and H. H. Kung, notable American publisher Henry Luce (*Time Magazine*) and United States Senators Joseph McCarthy, Pat McCarran, William Knowland (known as the Senator from Formosa), Styles Bridges, Bourke Hickenlooper, Owen Brewster, and William Jenner.⁴⁵ This group had a voice in *Time* magazine, the public's ear through powerful and influential politicians, and money through Chiang's relatives in America.

⁴⁵ Thomson, et al., *Sentimental Imperialists*, 1981, 229.

While the group argued that America "sold China down the Amur to the Soviets," they also had a number of other important effects. In their effort to equate support for Chiang with loyalty to America and democracy, the "China Lobby" also equated sympathy or support for the Chinese Communists with aid for the Soviet Union, support for a godless country, treason against the United States, and, in short, support for evil.

The most important side effect of the effort to equate support for Chiang with support for the U.S. and democracy and Christianity was to equate the Chinese Communists who opposed Chiang with the Soviet Union. Although many China experts such as the reporter Edgar Snow and the noted China scholar John King Fairbank asserted that Chinese Communism and Stalinism were very different things, the "China Lobby" had more influence over Americans.⁴⁶ Americans found little difference between Soviet totalitarianism and the social-economic-political system in China. Jonathan Spence identifies Karl Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism* as representative of American views on China during the 1950s. Wittfogel was both a China expert and a former communist who had clearly turned against the Soviet leaders in Moscow. Wittfogel painted a picture of a Chinese totalitarian government strikingly similar but not necessarily subordinate to the Soviet government. Wittfogel captured the essence of American thought regarding Sino-Soviet politics: China was not a Soviet satellite like the Eastern European nations; instead it was a junior partner in the Communist Bloc whose ambitions and ideals were nearly identical to Soviet ambitions and ideals.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ An excellent example of the argument posed by Fairbank or Snow or others in their group is found in the following article: John King Fairbank, "Can we Compete in China?" *Far Eastern Survey* 17 (May 1948): 113-7.

⁴⁷ Spence, *The Chan's Great Continent*, 2001, 206-18.

Americans also felt a great sense of betrayal. Americans experienced difficulty in understanding why the Chinese, whom America had helped so much and so often, turned to communism and thus, anti-Americanism. American feelings of betrayal were only enhanced when the Chinese intervened in the Korean War.⁴⁸

War in Korea totally convinced Americans that China was an American enemy. Feelings of betrayal and guilt were joined by fear and anger. Korea proved how large and powerful Mao's forces had become. The 300,000 Chinese storming south from China to attack American soldiers seemed not only to confirm what all Americans knew, that is, that there are a *huge* number of Chinese, but it also struck fear into the hearts of Americans because that giant population was, in 1950, turned against America and friendly with the Soviet Union.

Chinese actions in the Korean War also convinced Americans that the Chinese were militarily powerful. Indeed, the Korean War sparked one of America's greatest shifts in ideas regarding the Chinese. The Chinese were fighting with skill on the ground, driving American forces south of the 38th parallel, and were showing great technical competence with new artillery, armor, and especially in flying their new MiGs (Soviet jet fighters). In order to account for Chinese successes on the battlefield, Americans quickly dumped age-old ideas of Chinese military weakness and technical backwardness and assigned Mongolian qualities of military prowess and Soviet qualities of technical competency to the Chinese Communists. The huge number of Chinese troops lent itself to being described as a horde, further invoking images of the Mongolian warriors of the

⁴⁸ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 190-209.

thirteenth century. The great "Yellow Peril" was, in the eyes of Americans, armed and threatening.⁴⁹

More than just armed and threatening, the Chinese were described as cruel, barbarous, sadistic, and nerveless. The Chinese human sea tactics in the Korean War validated all of these characteristics for Americans. The Chinese Communist leaders were so barbarous and so sadistic that they had no regard for human life, and thus they sent hundreds of thousands of poorly armed Chinese infantrymen into Korea to face American firepower. Even worse, the "nerveless subhumans" marched by the thousands straight to their death! Further, America's lack of contact with Communist China led Americans to look at the Chinese hordes as a "faceless mass."⁵⁰

The pendulum of American attitudes and ideas of the Chinese, as it had before, swung well past any logical point. The Chinese did have Russian jets and they did have better armament than before. They were even allied with Moscow. The Chinese were not, however, technical experts nor were they warriors more magnificent than equally experienced American troops. Americans exaggerated Chinese military and technical abilities because of the combined shock of the "loss of China" and Chinese intervention and performance in the Korean War. The Chinese were not supposed to be a militaristic people. They were not supposed to be a modern people. Mao and the other Chinese had shocked and duped Americans but Americans were determined not to be fooled a second time. American overcompensation impacted the way Americans thought about even the most detailed and specific aspects of Mao's China. American perceptions of the Chinese

⁴⁹ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 209-31.

⁵⁰ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 232-8.

impacted how the media, military, and presidential administration viewed the Chinese Communist air force.

CHAPTER 2

CONTRADICTIONS: AMERICAN PRESS REPORTS ON THE PLAAF

Shortly after the end of the Korean War and shortly before the first Taiwan Strait Crisis, a popular aviation magazine reported on the modernization of the People's Liberation Army Air Force, stating that if Communist China threw its entire Soviet-built air force at America's Far East Air Force the American forces would barely have a fighting chance.¹ What the *Aviation Week* reporter, like many others later, failed to ask was could Communist China throw its full weight at any one target? During the two Taiwan Strait Crises many American reporters and government officials voiced similar opinions – China's air force, like the Chinese nation as a whole, if determined seemed too large to stop.

Images and ideas about China and the Chinese (described in the previous chapter) had made an impression on American minds, and members of the press and military experts were not impervious to this (or any other) aspect of American culture. Traditional images of the Chinese dotted the public discourse regarding the Chinese Communist air force; reporters or experts briefly mentioned Chinese barbarity, sadism, or nervelessness when describing the Chinese Communist air force. When describing the Chinese air force reporters and experts far more often invoked ideas and images of the "Soviet" Chinese, or at least Soviet-controlled and Soviet-supplied Chinese, and of the

¹ A. W. Jessup, "Red Asia Now Bristles with Modern Jets," *Aviation Week*, 11 January 1954, 12.

Chinese hordes. Images of Red China and of the Chinese hordes were so powerful that they often obscured the reality of the numerous problems and challenges that the People's Liberation Army Air Force faced.

Ideas of Chinese strength transmitted through images of Soviet influence and massive Chinese manpower did not, however, concur with the events over the Taiwan Strait. During the two Taiwan Strait Crises a contradiction emerged in the public discourse regarding the Chinese Communist air force. News reports, often short and buried deep in the day's paper, described Nationalist victories in the air, raids on Communist ships or military targets, and numerous Nationalist reconnaissance flights over mainland China. Nationalist victories did not, however, fit with American perceptions of a large and Soviet China.

Reporters and military experts used three approaches to deal with the emerging contradiction created between American views of Communist China and the reality of the air war over the Taiwan Strait. Two approaches were very popular; the third, while the most accurate, was also the least popular. The first approach was to ignore the news reports of Nationalist victories. The second approach used the theory that the Chinese Communists, or their Soviet masters, had deemed any PLAAF retaliation against the Nationalists inappropriate and were, in effect, keeping the Chinese Communist air force on a leash. Both approaches represented and presented popular ideas of the Chinese Communist air force and often invoked images of a China heavily influenced by the Soviet Union and of China's massive size and manpower reserve. The third approach, and the least common, was to recognize the many problems that the Chinese Communist air force was encountering and to recognize the effects of those problems. The third

approach, or realist approach, did not, however, totally abandon the powerful images of China; instead of arguing that China's population and the Soviet influence had already made the Chinese Communist air force strong, analysts who used the realist method argued that the Chinese Communist air force had tremendous potential and would *eventually* become strong because of manpower and Soviet aid. Just as nineteenth century American merchants were enamored by the potential of China's enormous market, the realists of the mid-twentieth century could not escape the thought that China's air force, despite its shortcomings, had enormous potential and would one day represent a serious threat to the United States. Although the realist method took common images of China into account, analysts most frequently turned to one of the popular methods when analyzing the Chinese Communists or the military situation in the Strait. Occasionally some analysts turned to the realist method, for at least a while, although I have found no evidence to suggest why they did so and any explanation would be speculation.²

The popular and realist views comprised the public discourse regarding the People's Liberation Army Air Force in America. The discourse among members of the press regarding the PLAAF, while public, was limited. The American public did not get involved in the conversation probably because they lacked the information to contribute to it. Also, the Chinese Communist air force, although a threat to American interests in East Asia, was not a threat to America and therefore, while Americans may have thought about the Soviet ICBM threat or the Soviet nuclear bomber, both of which were threats to

² The popular and realist approaches were intellectual tendencies to which I have applied labels. I have found no evidence that suggests reporters, military analysts, or government officials consciously divided themselves into schools of thought of any kind, let alone in the terms I have used, on the issue of the Chinese Communist air force.

the U.S., there was little reason to give much active thought to the Chinese Communist air force. What Americans knew and believed about the PLAAF was then dictated by the journalists and military analysts involved in the public discourse.

Conversation regarding the Chinese Communist air force was limited and generally occurred in magazines and newspapers. Robert Rigg did significantly address the PLAAF in *Red China's Fighting Hordes*, but his was the only book published in America in the 1950s to significantly address the subject. Magazines were a more popular forum. Most popular magazines (*Time*, *Life*, *Reader's Digest*, *U.S. News and World Report*, *Newsweek*, etc.) ran at least one article on the Chinese armed forces which included a significant discussion of the Chinese Communist air force. More limited in some ways yet more popular and open in others were newspapers. Many more articles regarding the Chinese air force were published in newspapers than in magazines, yet only the *New York Times* significantly covered the military aspect of the Taiwan Strait Crises and thus the Chinese Communist air force. The *Chicago Tribune*, one of the nation's most prominent papers with strong foreign coverage (such as full page spreads on developments in France, Britain, or other European countries) had little to say about the Taiwan Strait Crises and even less to say about the military (as opposed to political) aspect of the crises. For example, an Associated Press report covering the 10 January 1955 Chinese Communist air force assault on the Dachen islands made the front page of the *New York Times* while the *Chicago Tribune* relegated it to the eighth page. Although the two newspapers ran the same AP article, the *New York Times'* treatment of the event as front page news symbolizes that paper's devotion to news regarding China. Further, while the *New York Times* significantly covered other aspects of the crises, the *Chicago*

Tribune did not. Also, and concomitantly, the *New York Times* ran analyses of the Chinese Communists and the military situation in the Strait which were unparalleled in scope and content when compared with other major American newspapers.

Since few people had the knowledge or desire to contribute to the public discourse regarding the Chinese Communist air force, anybody who wanted to contribute was guaranteed to have a voice and there was little chance that it would be drowned out by opposing opinions. Chiang Kai-shek and his followers thus not only had connections with media mogul Henry Luce (publisher of *Time*) but also had input into a conversation where few others could oppose yet all could hear their opinions – a perfect opportunity for Chiang to further his political goals, the greatest of which was to secure American arms and aid.

Although the “China Lobby” and many journalists who held the popular view relied heavily on images of Soviet influence and Chinese manpower to convey ideas of Chinese strength, other images and ideas about the Chinese still dotted their opinions of the Chinese Communist air force. Americans began to apply ideas of Chinese barbarity to the People’s Liberation Army Air Force shortly before the beginning of the first Taiwan Strait Crisis. Chinese Communist fighters shot down a British airliner flying from Bangkok to Hong Kong on 23 July 1954 after apparently mistaking it for a Nationalist bomber. In the wake of the incident one of the survivors, Peter Thacher, an American, described the incident in an article published in *Reader’s Digest*. He concluded his article with a question: Why did the Chinese commit such a brutal and

cruel act?³ Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and *Time* magazine provided the answer – Chinese barbarity.⁴

Although images of the barbarous Chinese air force were strongest, other traditional images also speckled the public discourse regarding China's air force. References to the Chinese as "nerveless subhumans" were subdued yet present. American journalists claimed that the Chinese had trained their pilots by sending them into combat against the more skilled American pilots. Inherent in China's decision to use the Korean War as a training ground was its willingness to throw life away – a Chinese characteristic which *New York Times* reporter Hanson Baldwin thought was never in doubt.⁵

Although American journalists invoked some images of Chinese barbarity or nervelessness when describing the Chinese Communist air force, images of Soviet influence and Chinese manpower dominated the discussion regarding China's air force. The use of such imagery led to major contradictions in American thought.

Harry Schwartz, a *New York Times* reporter and analyst, in a four-column article in the Sunday, 28 November 1954 issue of the *New York Times* stated, "As the recent air battles between Communist and Nationalist forces have demonstrated, Communist China now has a powerful air force estimated to include between 2,000 and 2,500 aircraft of all types, including jets and bombers."⁶ Schwartz was accurate on the size of the Chinese

³ Peter Thacher, "Incident on the China Coast," *Reader's Digest*, November 1954, 14, 19, 22.

⁴ "China Seas," *Time*, 2 August 1954, 25; "Red China: A 'Kill' off Hainan," *Newsweek*, 2 August 1954, 37.

⁵ "Where \$1,600,000,000 of your Taxes Went: Korea, the First Jet-age Air War," *Fortune*, October 1953, 65.

⁶ Harry Schwartz, "Communist China: Nature of Far East Threat," 28 November 1954, sec. 4, p. 3.

Communist air force but it is hard to figure out how he arrived at the conclusion that the Chinese air force was a potent weapon.

There were some news reports of an increasingly strong Communist Chinese air force in the weeks and months preceding Schwartz's article. Newspapers and magazines continually reported that the Communists were building up their air force, particularly in East China, across the strait from Formosa.⁷ Reports had also described an increasingly aggressive Communist Chinese air force. In addition to the downing of a British airliner flying into Hong Kong (described earlier in this chapter), beginning in September 1954, Communist planes engaged Nationalist fighters and bombed Nationalist offshore islands, giving further credence to claims of Communist aggression in the air.⁸ Perhaps American actions also contributed to Schwartz's perception of Chinese Communist air strength; the United States moved three aircraft carriers into the Taiwan Strait in September 1954 in order to defend Formosa from Communist naval and especially air attack.⁹ Also, despite the many American air victories against the Chinese over Korea from 1950 to 1953, to Americans in the mid-1950s it seemed hard to believe that the People's Liberation Army Air Force could be anything but powerful. The Soviets, after all, were coaching, or possibly controlling, the Chinese air force. *Fortune* magazine stated in 1953,

⁷ Henry R. Lieberman, "Chiang Due to Get Saberjets Soon," *New York Times*, 21 November 1954, sec. 1, p. 17; Hanson W. Baldwin, "China Action Worries U.S.," *NYT*, 4 November 1954, p. 6; Hanson W. Baldwin, "Nehru Belied by Peiping," *NYT*, 2 November 1954, p. 11; "Peiping Produces Own Planes," *NYT*, 29 September 1954, p. 3;

⁸ "Red China Planes Strike," *New York Times*, 19 November 1954, p. 3; "Tachen Islands Bombed by Soviet-Built Planes," *NYT*, 2 November 1954, p. 8; "President Alert to Quemoy Peril; Red Bombers Fly Over Formosa," *NYT*, 6 September 1954, p. 1; "China Seas," *Time*, 2 August 1954, 25; "A 'Kill' off Hainan," *Newsweek*, 2 August 1954, 36-7; Peter Thacher, "Incident on the China Coast," *Reader's Digest*, November 1954, 14-22.

⁹ "7th Fleet Acted to Defend Formosa," *NYT*, 29 September 1954, p. 6.

The "Chinese Air Force" is, in a sense, a semantic invention. It remained under close operational control of Soviet airmen throughout the Korean War, and no doubt continues so today. For all practical purposes, the CCAF [Chinese Communist or Communist Chinese Air Force] was a superficially Sinofied branch of the Soviet Air Forces, yet a branch big enough to rate as the world's third largest air force, after the U.S.S.R. and the U.S., but ahead of Britain.¹⁰

Articles in the *Atlantic* and in American newspapers mentioned similar ideas.¹¹ Reports of increased PLAAF size, strength, Soviet coaching, and aggressiveness led Schwartz to conclude that the Communists were developing a very powerful air force to threaten American protected Formosa.

Reports of Communist attacks, Communist air victories, and even Communist use of MiGs as interceptors on a strictly defensive role were sporadic at best, however. Most reports indicated that the Nationalists had been victorious in most of the air battles over the Taiwan Strait. For example, in late 1954 the *New York Times* reported, "Formosa Craft Blast China's Coast Again" and "Nationalists Rout Reds' Planes."¹² Although Chiang's attack on the China coast made the front page, the report of the air battle, like so many others, was relegated to the end of the paper. The autumn and winter of 1954 saw reports of numerous Nationalist air victories, often in the face of superior Communist numbers and technology. For example, despite reports that Russian-built jets were in eastern China, Nationalist propeller-driven, World War II vintage fighter-bombers (P-47 Thunderbolts) successfully bombed Chinese Communist artillery positions in East China while the Chinese Communists failed even to attempt to intercept the nearly obsolete P-

¹⁰ "Defense and Strategy: Where \$1,600,000,000 of Your Taxes Went: Korea, the First Jet-Age War," *Fortune*, October 1953, 56.

¹¹ "Red China," *Atlantic*, March 1954, p. 15-8; "Red Base Near Formosa," *NYT*, 24 May 1954, p. 3.

¹² "Formosa Craft Blast China's Coast Again," *NYT*, 7 September 1954, p. 1, 8; "Nationalists Rout Reds' Planes," *NYT*, 18 November 1954, p. 9.

47s.¹³ Reports of the Nationalist attacks on the mainland were buried in the newspaper while the front-page headline "Red Bombers Fly Over Formosa" stressed the strength of the Communist Chinese air force.¹⁴ It was commonplace, however, for the media to stress the size of the Communist air force, its few offensive actions, and the Soviet influence on the Chinese Communist air force.

Another November report in the *New York Times* also stressed the strength of the Communist air forces, especially the Chinese Communist air force, in the Far East. Unlike Schwartz, Hanson Baldwin both cited Communist air force size and composition and also mentioned quizzically that the Communists had been holding their air force on a leash. Baldwin stated, "Chiang Kai-shek may have about 200 propeller-driven operational aircraft of all types. . . . He has at least one group of F-84 jets, useful for close ground support, but outclassed by the Soviet-built MIG's," this despite the fact that in May of that year the *New York Times* reported that inferior Nationalist planes had successfully defeated Communist MiGs over the Strait.¹⁵

Similar reports appeared throughout the rest of the 1954-5 crisis. Front-page headlines such as "100 Communist Planes Raid Nationalist Isles Off China" emphasized the size and aggressiveness of the Chinese Communist air force, while reports of Communist ineffectiveness or of Nationalist raids or victories were buried deep within articles or were listed separately and far from the front page. Chiang Kai-shek, the Nationalist government, and their supporters in the United States also emphasized the

¹³ "President Alert to Quemoy Peril; Red Bombers Fly Over Formosa," 6 September 1954, p. 3; "Red Base Near Formosa, *NYT*, 24 May 1954, p. 3.

¹⁴ "President Alert to Quemoy Peril; Red Bombers Fly Over Formosa," 6 September 1954, p. 3.

¹⁵ Hanson W. Baldwin, "China Action Worries U.S.," *NYT*, 4 November 1954, p. 6; "Formosa Reports Air Battles," *NYT*, 12 May 1954, p. 3.

strength of the Communist air force. Although the Nationalists had recently won significant air battles against a technologically and numerically superior Communist air force, the Chief of Nationalist China's Air Force cited the strength of the People's Liberation Army Air Force when he requested 160 of the U.S.'s most modern jets to be speedily delivered to Taiwan.¹⁶

Nationalist claims of Communist air strength seemed to be justified as the crisis continued. In January, February, and March of 1955 the Communist Chinese did use their air force in offensive operations. The largest of these operations was the campaign to take the Nationalist held island of Yijiangshan (Yikiang). During the campaign the Communists attacked both Yijiangshan and the Dachen Islands by air, but with only limited success.¹⁷ Chinese Communist amphibious forces took Yijiangshan even without good air support. Although it was impressive that the young Chinese air force was able to muster sufficient air support for the operation, Communist bombs were not very effective or accurate. The newspapers reported that the Communists had great success, however, with their air power during the Yijiangshan Campaign.¹⁸

The Yijiangshan Campaign seemed to mark a turning point for the Chinese Communist air force. The leash that had held the Communist air force for so long seemed to have been cut. In March, however, the Communist government in Beijing reported that Nationalist planes continued to fly over the mainland, 649 sorties during

¹⁶ "Formosa Asks U.S. for Jets," *NYT*, 14 June 1954, p. 2.

¹⁷ Kenneth W. Allen, Glenn Krumel, and Jonathan D. Pollack, *China's Air Force Enters the 21st Century* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1995), 60-1.

¹⁸ "Chinese Reds Take Isle Near Tachens in Sea-Air Assault," *NYT*, 19 January 1955, p. 1.

March.¹⁹ Despite inferior numbers of aircraft and often despite using World War II vintage aircraft instead of Korean War or post-Korean War era jets like the Communist Chinese possessed, the Nationalists suffered few losses to air combat. Until this point the Communist Chinese had shown only limited ability to mass aircraft for operations, either offensive or defensive.²⁰ In April, at the end of the crisis, American papers were still filled with contradictions regarding the People's Liberation Army Air Force despite the almost nine months of open PLAAF action, or rather, inaction. When the Chinese transferred about thirty Soviet-built light jet bombers (IL-28s) and some MiGs to the Fujian province coast, across from Taiwan, the *New York Times* reported that American officials regarded the situation as "grave."²¹ At the end of the 1954-5 crisis, government officials and military analysts were still serving the American people an analysis of the People's Liberation Army Air Force that made great use of images of Chinese manpower and Soviet influence and thus overestimated the PLAAF's abilities.

When the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis began, the estimate of the Communist Chinese air force provided by the American media and some American officials seemed to fit. Despite some embarrassing losses from 1955 to 1958, the People's Liberation Army Air Force appeared strong at the opening of the second crisis. News reports showed that the Communist air force was challenging and defeating Nationalist violations of Communist Chinese air space and Nationalist air superiority over the

¹⁹ "Red China Reports Air Sorties," *NYT*, 7 April, 1955, 5.

²⁰ Richard M. Bueschel, *Communist Chinese Air Power* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1968), 36.

²¹ Greg MacGregor, "New Red Jet Craft Sighted," *NYT*, 20 April 1955, p. 12.

Taiwan Strait.²² The increased threat posed by the Communist air force was validated by reports of newer jets in the People's Air Force and an increased size of the Communist air force on the China coast near Taiwan.²³ There were, however, problems with the PLAAF. In early August twelve Communist MiG-17s, an advanced interceptor and fighter jet, jumped a smaller group of nearly obsolete Nationalist jets over the China coast. Despite the attackers' advantages – superior numbers, superior technology, and better location (i.e., closer to home base) – the Nationalist pilots escaped the encounter without loss.

The popular paradigm remained intact but the contradictions abounded. In a 12 August report and analysis, *New York Times* journalist Tillman Durdin stated that “Some Chinese and United States officials here [Taipei] believe the new aggressiveness of the Communists in the air may be a prelude to some kind of amphibious assault on the Nationalist held offshore islands.”²⁴ Durdin also reported that few Chinese Communist planes had ever flown over the sea and they normally remained confined to flights over the mainland. He did not, however, suggest that most Chinese pilots *could not* fly over water (which actually was one of the PLAAF's major weaknesses although there is no evidence that Americans were aware of it).²⁵ Although the Yijiangshan campaign represented the full extent of Chinese Communist air action over water during the 1950s, the American press did not realize it. Tillman Durdin was, however, apparently unaware of the contradiction and offered no theory to explain the PLAAF's aversion to flying

²² “Chinese MIG's Down 2 Taiwan Fighters,” *NYT*, 30 July 1958, p. 3.

²³ “Chinese Air Build-up on Coast Reported,” *NYT*, 3 August 1958, p. 25; “Nationalists on Alert for Chinese Red Attack,” *NYT*, 4 August 1958, p. 3; “Red Build-up Reported,” *NYT*, 6 August 1958, p. 8.

²⁴ Tillman Durdin, “Peiping's Planes Active on Coast,” *NYT*, 12 August 1958, p. 9.

²⁵ Allen, et al., *China's Air Force*, 1995, 59.

beyond the China coast, nor did he offer any theory to explain why American and Nationalist officials feared the offensive power of Communist China's air force despite the lack of evidence of such a capability.

Communist China's air force suffered more damage when, on 14 August 1958, Nationalist jets shot down two or three (the reports are unclear as to the exact number) of the Communists' most advanced fighters. By the end of August, however, the United States sent a squadron (about 25 jets) of its most advanced fighters, the F-100D, to Taiwan and six aircraft carriers to the Taiwan Strait for the purpose of defending Taiwan from air attacks.²⁶ United States actions and Communist performance were not in line. The People's Liberation Army Air Force was, in pilot parlance, "getting its tail waxed" by the Nationalists and without U.S. help. The big Nationalist victory made the second page of the *New York Times* but the American deployment of the F-100D squadron and the six aircraft carriers made the front page. Once again reports of Chinese size and strength made headlines while events that proved otherwise were relegated to positions of lesser importance.

Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists carefully added to the emphasis on Communist capabilities. Dr. Yu Dawei, the Nationalist Minister of Defense during the 1958 Crisis, stated to a *New York Times* reporter that the Communists were "disputing air control over the offshore islands," and, further, "with air control went surface and supply control." Yu also said that the Nationalists would be able to maintain control over the

²⁶ Jack Raymond, "More U.S. Planes Sent to Far East to Assist Taiwan," *NYT*, 31 August 1958, p. 1.

islands but his tone indicated that he thought the Chinese air force could seriously damage his own government's air force.²⁷

Nationalists and Americans alike seemed to forget the difference between potential and capabilities. Hanson W. Baldwin reported in 1958,

Peiping [Beijing] has carefully built up its strength in the Amoy area during the last three years. The Communists now have military capabilities they did not possess earlier. Jet airfields have been built. A railroad to Amoy has been completed and coastal roads are in use. . . .²⁸

Jet airfields, railroads, and roads constituted Chinese Communist infrastructure, not capabilities. Certainly, railroads, roads, and airfields gave the Communists the potential to develop an offensive capability in the Taiwan Strait area, but the Communist developments did not compose a force that could strike at Taiwan. Baldwin conflated potential and capability, and thus exaggerated the strength of the Communist air force.

To be fair, Hanson Baldwin was not entirely off the mark. Baldwin had some insight into the PLA and its air arm and occasionally he perceived the Chinese Communist air force in a more realistic fashion. Nor was Baldwin the first to display some tendency to view the Chinese air force more realistically than the popular view called for.

Army Lieutenant Colonel Robert Rigg displayed such a tendency in 1951. While his description of the People's Liberation Army as "Red China's Ochre Hordes" played right to American stereotypes of the Chinese, Rigg included in his work much intelligent and insightful military analysis. Writing prior to the People's Liberation Army Air

²⁷ Tillman Durdin, "Taipei's Defense Minister Cites 'Restraint' on Striking at Reds," *NYT*, 15 August 1958, p. 2.

²⁸ Hanson W. Baldwin, "The Quemoy Blockade," *NYT*, 5 September 1958, p. 4.

Force's entry into the war, he observed: "Fortunately for us, we have not seen the Chinese attempt to dominate the Korean skies; but we are in for serious trouble, at least for a brief period, when they do."²⁹ Addressing the Korean War rather than the Taiwan Strait Crises, Rigg forwarded a plausible analysis of why the Chinese air force had not attacked U.N. forces. He argued that the Chinese and Soviets were unsure if the young air force was ready to tackle the combat-hardened United States Air Force. Rigg established an important tradition in his analysis of the Chinese air force that others would follow in the wake of the Korean War.

After September 1951 the situation that Rigg was describing no longer existed. China faced the United States in the air. Much of Rigg's analysis, however, remained valid, especially his analysis of Chinese Communist logistics. Rigg quite accurately stated that the People's Liberation Army lived on "shoestring logistics," and based on his first hand experience in China in the late forties established that the Chinese infrastructure (i.e. roads and railroads) was inadequate for the logistics of a modern military.³⁰

Rigg's analysis included the two key aspects of the realist viewpoint: he recognized that despite its massive size and modern Soviet jets the Chinese Communists' air force was incapable of making full use of its assets; but he also conceded to the popular images and concluded that Soviet aid and massive size would eventually become extremely important for the Chinese Communist air force.

²⁹ Robert B. Rigg, *Red China's Fighting Hordes* (Harrisburg: The Telegraph Press, October 1951), 320. The Chinese Air Force did not enter the Korean War until September 1951, only a month before the first printing of Rigg's book. Xiaoming Zhang, "China and the Air War in Korea," *Journal of Military History* 62 (April 1998): 336.

³⁰ Rigg, *Red China's Fighting Hordes*, 1951, 281, 300.

Toward the end of the first Taiwan Strait Crisis, Hanson Baldwin, the *New York Times* reporter and analyst, displayed a similar tendency. Early in the crisis he stated that the Chinese Communists were holding their air force on a leash. Baldwin's statement begged the question, why did China restrain its powerful air force?³¹ By March 1955 Baldwin had revised his opinion of the Communist air force. In his 27 March 1955 article Baldwin cited the size and modernity of the People's Liberation Army Air Force. Although he also stated that the Chinese Communist pilots enjoyed the advantage of position over their Nationalist enemies because Communist airfields were closer than Nationalist airfields to Quemoy and Matsu, Baldwin asserted that, "These advantages at the moment are not as great as they might appear."³² Baldwin, like Rigg, explained that problems with Communist logistics and communications lines would prevent the Communists from establishing all of the support infrastructure along the Fujian coast necessary for a really powerful air attack on Quemoy, Matsu, or Formosa. He identified a key Communist supply problem: gasoline. Baldwin claimed that gasoline, or lack thereof, was the leash that was restraining the Communist air force. Baldwin also explained that despite the impressive size of the People's Liberation Army Air Force, its forces were dispersed throughout China with much of the force located in Manchuria. Like Rigg, however, Baldwin cautioned the American public, stating that at some time in the future Communist China would have the strength in the Strait to seriously challenge not only the Nationalists but also the American forces in the Far East. Baldwin's focus was on the present, however, and his analysis was the first report in the *New York Times*

³¹ Hanson W. Baldwin, "China Action Worries U.S.," *NYT*, 4 November 1954, p. 6

³² Hanson W. Baldwin, "Quemoy -Matsu Defense Raises Key Problems," *NYT*, 27 March 1955, p.

to suggest that the Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force was not an offensive threat to Formosa, Quemoy, or Matsu.

Two days later, the *New York Times* reported that President Dwight Eisenhower had stated that he thought the Chinese Communists were not yet capable of launching a massive offensive air campaign like one necessary to capture Quemoy or Matsu. Eisenhower's statement flew in the face of earlier news reports that senior American military officials thought that the Chinese had a significant offensive capability located on the China coast near the offshore islands.³³ The President and Hanson Baldwin were among a small group during the 1954-5 Taiwan Strait Crisis claiming that the Communist air force lacked the offensive capabilities necessary to threaten the security of the Nationalist islands.

In 1958 Baldwin expressed similar sentiments. Unlike some of his other analyses, his 24 August report was dead on target. Baldwin explained that the Chinese Communist air force was not nearly as great a threat as Chiang and some Americans had made it out to be because its pilots lacked the same extensive training common to Nationalist pilots, and further that the MiG-17 was not entirely superior to Nationalist F-86Ds. Baldwin also stressed, however, that despite the PLAAF's shortcomings the Chinese had a large military, primarily due to China's massive reserve of manpower, and was receiving Soviet support for modernization. He concluded, "The Chinese Communists have therefore an eventual capability for an amphibious assault upon the offshore islands or for a combined air and sea blockade."³⁴

³³ W. H. Lawrence, "Eisenhower Sees No War Now Over Chinese Isles; West Charts Big 4 Talks: Alarm Deplored," *NYT*, 29 March 1955, p. 1.

Baldwin was again among a small number of American reporters and officials who claimed that the Communist air force lacked a credible offensive capability in 1958. *U.S. News and World Report*, a popular news magazine, also displayed a tendency to view the military situation over the Strait with great clarity and realism. In October 1958 *U.S. News and World Report* ran an unattributed article on the Nationalist use of America's new heat-seeking air-to-air missile, the Sidewinder. "For the Chinese Nationalists, the use of the Sidewinder meant a new boost for their pilots," the author stated. The reporter went on to state, as if to dispel a popular belief to the contrary, that the Nationalists had been able to establish superiority over the Communists without the new missile. The author then wrote, "But, actually, the Reds were being badly beaten in the air long before the missile made its appearance in combat." Although there is no concrete evidence that this information would have been surprising to the public, the tone indicates that the author expected the readers to be surprised to hear that the Nationalists were winning in the air even without the Sidewinder.³⁵

Americans who only casually examined news reports regarding the Taiwan Strait Crises would have found the *U.S. News and World Report* article surprising. Nationalist victories were usually mentioned only briefly in the American news during both crises. Even experts seemed to ignore Nationalist air victories. Instead, reporters and officials, either through their words or actions, expounded the strength of the People's Liberation Army Air Force. For most members of the American press images of China's massive manpower reserve and the Soviet aid obscured the reality of the People's Liberation

³⁴ Hanson W. Baldwin, "Alarm Over Taiwan," *NYT*, 24 August 1958, p. 4.

³⁵ "Sidewinder vs. Reds: In Air Over Quemoy – Chiang's Fliers Are Winning," *U.S. News and World Report*, 10 October 1953, 38-9.

Army Air Force. It was inconceivable to these people, as well as to the American public, that the Chinese Air Force, with its gargantuan size and advanced Soviet support, would be unable to launch its strength only fifty or one hundred or one hundred and fifty miles over the Taiwan Strait, distances that would take only minutes to cover in advanced Soviet-built jets. The Nationalists stood to gain from the American delusion. There is no evidence that they made much of an effort to promote knowledge of their own strength in America. If it was Chiang's plan to emphasize the strength of the Communists then his plan worked; the U.S. sent protection in the form of jets and aircraft carriers and also modernized Taiwan's air force with new F-86D and F-100D jets and new Sidewinder missiles.

Although many members of the American press only emphasized the strength of the Chinese Communist air force and tended to be blind to Chinese Communist shortcomings, a few American experts had tremendous insight. Although some of these insightful reports reached the American public, it is doubtful that the public would have systematically examined their own assumptions regarding the Chinese Communists because of a few isolated realist reports. Further, the majority of reports confirmed what many Americans thought about the Chinese. Because of the overwhelming number of news reports which emphasized Chinese Communist air force strength most Americans probably only saw Red China's flying hordes and never questioned if those hordes could actually sweep all before them by "sheer numbers and rapacity."³⁶

³⁶ Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York: The John Day Company, 1958), 99.

CHAPTER 3

EXPERTS AND THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE

American military officers comprised a small but important minority of Americans who had experience with and thought about the capabilities, potential, history, and performance of the Chinese air forces, both Nationalist and Communist. This group of Americans had by 1949 already formed perceptions of a Chinese air force because, unlike the American public, media, or civil-military elite (i.e., the President, cabinet members, senior advisors, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and theater Commanders in Chief), the American military experience with the Chinese air forces predated America's "loss of China."¹ A handful of American pilots and retired or reserve Army Air Corps personnel ventured to China as part of aviation or military missions during the 1930s. Although prior to the outbreak of World War II only a few American pilots or military personnel knew anything about the Chinese air forces, many after World War II knew quite a lot because of extensive experience with the Chinese air forces during the war. World War II served to introduce thousands of American airmen to China and its air forces either through the American Volunteer Group in China, the Army Air Forces in China, or the thousands of Chinese airmen training with the Army Air Force in the

¹ For extensive discussion of the American role in the early development of Chinese air forces (especially Nationalist and warlord air forces) see, Guangqiu Xu, *War Wings: The United States and Chinese Military Aviation, 1929-1949* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001).

United States.² Also, during the Korean War, this group of Americans, unlike the public or the civil-military elite, was primarily concerned with the Chinese air force as opposed to Chinese forces in general or matters of grand strategy. American officers were, then, the experts on the People's Liberation Army Air Force during the two Taiwan Strait Crises. Colonels, majors, and captains in the U.S. armed forces prepared many of the reports on the PLAAF used by the Joint Chiefs, Secretary of State, the President, and others. The opinions of these midlevel officials also reached the American news media. Thus, the military had a tremendous influence on how the rest of America thought about the Chinese Communist air force during the two Taiwan Strait Crises. Despite their expertise and experience, however, members of the American defense and intelligence establishments were influenced by American culture. Their perceptions of the Communist Chinese air force during the two Taiwan Strait Crises were a blend of realism based on experience with China, traditional ideas and images of the Chinese which predated the events of 1949 and 1950, and new images and ideas of China caused by the traumatic events of the "loss of China" and the Korean War. American air officers often only paid lip service to the Chinese Communists' problems of logistics and supply while emphasizing other characteristics of the People's Liberation Army Air Force, especially size and Soviet influence.

American air officers tended to focus on the immense manpower available to the Chinese air force because of generations of stories about China's enormous population. They also tended to focus on the Soviet influence of the Chinese air force because of the Cold War and as an explanation for Chinese modernization. Size and Soviet influence

² Xu, *War Wings*, 2001, 155, 167, 170.

were not, however, the only American ideas of China that affected American air officers' perceptions of the Chinese Communist air force. American ideas of Chinese barbarity, ideas of the Chinese as "nerveless subhumans," and Chinese technological backwardness best illustrate that American perceptions of the Chinese Communist air force were shaped by age old American perceptions of the Chinese in addition to more recent perceptions of the Chinese caused by the events of 1949 and 1950, the Cold War, and Communist Bloc relations.³ American military officers as part of the American population undoubtedly read, as many other Americans did, the articles in newspapers and popular magazines about the barbarity of the Chinese air force displayed in the downing of a British airliner (discussed in the previous chapter). In American minds Chinese barbarity was matched with Chinese "nervelessness." One Air Force officer in the Far East Air Forces wrote in an intelligence brief, "... the CCAF [Chinese Communist Air Force] does not require the same quantity or quality of support facilities and equipment. It is possible for them to operate on a relatively large scale with a minimum of such equipment--through acceptance of much lower standards of safety and comfort [*sic*]."⁴ This officer's views of the Chinese sharply parallels nineteenth-century Americans' views of Chinese "coolie" laborers who could survive in even the most hostile environments with little or no complaint, who could subsist on a fistful of rice, and who in doing so displayed how little they had progressed past the animals and how far they were from being as developed as

³ Harold Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York: The John Day Company, 1958), 234, 225-238.

⁴ Deputy for Intelligence, Far East Air Forces, "FEAF Intelligence Roundup," February 1954, p. 21, AFHRA K720.607A.

Anglo-Saxons.⁵ Finally, Western perceptions of Chinese technological backwardness affected the way Americans thought about the Chinese air force, causing Americans to either underestimate the PLAAF or to overestimate it in a violent reaction to the new Chinese air force.

Wing Commander Asher Lee, a British RAF officer, wrote in the widely read *RAF Flying Review*, "How is it that Red Asia, an area of the world which, but a few years ago, was symbolized by mechanical devices no more complex than the rickshaw, should suddenly present such an awe-inspiring picture of modern military strength?"⁶ Although Lee was a British officer, he was part of an Anglo-American dialogue regarding the Chinese Communists that took place not only in military journals but also between the American and British Chiefs of Staff who exchanged notes on the Chinese armed forces.⁷ Further, Lee was writing for *RAF Flying Review*, copies of which could be found at the U.S. Air Force's Air University Library during the 1950s; thus, American officers had access to Lee's work. Also, the Air University Library copy is marked, which indicates that American air officers were not only reading Lee's article but were reading it with a careful eye. Further, because USAF officers were reading Lee's article, he was at least influencing what and how American air officers thought about the Chinese air force. U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Robert Rigg, writing for both the American public and his fellow military officers, also addressed the issue of Chinese technological inaptitude,

⁵ Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 101-4, Robert McClellan, *The Heathen Chinese: A Study of American Attitudes toward China, 1890-1905* (Ohio State University Press, 1971), 82-4.

⁶ Asher Lee, "Threat in the East," *Royal Air Force Flying Review*, April 1956, 27.

⁷ Enclosure to Note by the Secretaries to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Vulnerability of China," 4 January 1951, RG 341, Box 732; Enclosure to Note by the Secretaries to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Vulnerability of China," 8 March 1951, RG 341, Box 732.

stating that Soviet advice and Soviet technology had set the "slant-eyed" pilots' "brains awirl."⁸ Although Rigg's statement is somewhat ambiguous, he seems to be indicating that the Soviet advisors thoroughly confused their Chinese students; such an interpretation would also fit with many of Rigg's other comments regarding the nature of the Chinese.

The perceptions that USAF officers had of the PLAAF had little basis in actual experience with Chinese air forces prior to 1949. American military and aviation missions to China began in 1930 and continued intermittently until 1949. Prior to World War II these missions were small and often staffed by retired or reserve Air Corps officers and men and generated little interest within the U.S. military. World War II increased American interest in China, and the military missions to China expanded during World War II and the subsequent Chinese civil war and thus exposed a significant number of Air Corps, and later Air Force, officers to China and its air force. American aviators and supporting officers and men in China developed mixed thoughts regarding the Chinese. On the one hand the Americans were impressed with the individual Chinese and thought that they made excellent pilots if trained along U.S. standards.⁹ On the other hand, the Americans in China during and after World War II recognized significant problems with the Chinese Nationalist air force including significant leadership issues (namely corruption and graft), Nationalist reluctance to commit its air force to combat for fear of losing planes, low Nationalist morale, and especially significant supply, logistics,

⁸ Robert B. Rigg, *Red China's Fighting Hordes* (Harrisburg: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1951), 320.

⁹ Letter from A.C. Wedemeyer to George C. Marshall, 24 January 1945, RG 341, Box 733.

and economic problems and limitations.¹⁰ At the end of World War II supply, logistics, and economic problems and limitations led American air officers to recommend for the postwar period the development of only a small Chinese air force.¹¹

The rapidity of Communist air force development shocked American air officers. Although American air officers had thought China to be incapable of supporting more than 8 1/3 air groups, or 936 aircraft, by the middle of the Korean War the Chinese Communist air force was not only sporting new Soviet-built MiG-15s, but American intelligence estimated that the Chinese had almost 1,500 aircraft of all types.¹² The apparent buildup of the Chinese air force may not have been as dramatic as estimated in the Korean War intelligence reports because, as one air intelligence officer stated, USAF intelligence was unable to differentiate between Chinese, North Korean, and Soviet aircraft.¹³ Nevertheless, the effect of reports of such dramatic growth was to shock air officers who thought that China was logistically and economically incapable of supporting a large air force. Intelligence improved after the war ended and within one year of the war's end, USAF intelligence reported that the Chinese Communist air force had reached a strength of 2,000 aircraft with half being modern jet fighters; in American

¹⁰ Director, Commission on Aeronautical Affairs National Government Republic of China and Headquarters Air Division, Nanking Headquarters Command China Theater, "Joint Staff Study No. 1: The Modernization of the Chinese Air Force," 11 April 1946, National Archives II, College Park, MD, RG 341, Box 735; Xu, *War Wings*, 2001, 210-2; "History of Air Division I: Nanking Headquarters Command, Nanking, China, 1 April 1946-30 June 1946 – Army Air Forces Liaison Team, 1st Composite Wing CAF Hankow, China, History, 1 April 1946 through 30 June 1946," 861.01 April-June 1946, in USAF collection AFHRA; Willis B. Sawyer, "Utilization of Air Power in the Neutralization of Communist China" (Air War College Thesis, Air University, 1951), 30.

¹¹ 7 November 1947 Memorandum for General Ritchie from Colonel T. S. Olds, Subject: 8 1/3 Group Program for China, National Archives II, College Park, MD, RG 341, Box 734.

¹² Xu, *War Wings*, 2001, 198; "FEAF Weekly Intelligence Roundup," 62, 4 November 1951-10 November 1951, p. 1, AFHRA, K-720.607A.

¹³ "Weekly Intelligence Roundup, 20 May 1951" K720.607A

eyes the PLAAF had doubled the number of aircraft that the nation could effectively support.¹⁴

Even as the People's Liberation Army Air Force buildup slowed in the postwar years, American intelligence officers stressed the size of the PLAAF and either ignored or gave little credence to the supply, logistical, or economic problems faced by the Chinese Communists. American air intelligence officers emphasized two particular points of Communist strength, the number of aircraft and the number of airfields, both of which stemmed, at least in part, from ideas of the massive Chinese population.

Most important was the size of the Chinese Communist air force. Although many air officers mentioned Chinese airfields as a strength of the PLAAF, most air officers focused on the sheer size of the Chinese Communist air force. USAF intelligence officers in the Far East reported in a February 1954 brief that the "Chinese Communists have a mighty air armada of some 2,400 combat-ready aircraft lined up on their many adequate (but by USAF standards ill-equipped & poor-quality) airfields in China, Manchuria, and North Korea."¹⁵ The USAF intelligence officers emphasized this information by putting it in boldface and by not setting it in columnar form like the rest of the report. Other U.S. officers, influenced by the Air Intelligence reports, took a similar approach to analyzing the Chinese Communist air force. Marine Corps Colonel Carl Felps, an Air War College student, in his 1955 thesis "China: Neutral, Ally or Enemy," focused only on numbers of Chinese Communist pilots while ignoring issues of training, supplies, logistics, or even combat effectiveness despite the poor showing of the

¹⁴ "FEAF Intelligence Roundup," February 1954, 4, AFHRA, K-720.607A.

¹⁵ Deputy for Intelligence, Far East Air Forces, "FEAF Intelligence Roundup," February 1954, p. 13, AFHRA K720.607A.

Chinese Communist pilots in both the Korean War and, more recently, the first Taiwan Strait Crisis.¹⁶ U.S. Naval officers also used size as the best measure of Chinese Communist air capabilities. One naval air analyst opened his *Naval Aviation News* article, "The Chinese Communist Air Force has one of the largest jet fighter forces in the world."¹⁷ The analyst maintained his focus on PLAAF strength and massive size throughout the article and never mentioned the logistical or supply issues that would hamper Chinese Communist air operations in the event of war. Authors who did mention Chinese logistics or supply problems ignored the implications of such problems. RAF officer Asher Lee stated that oil was the biggest "stumbling block" to the PLAAF, an accurate statement.¹⁸ Lee also stated, however, "Should they so desire, the Sino-Communists could mount upwards of eight hundred combat aircraft from the Fukien [Fujian] complex of bases to cover any assault on Formosa."¹⁹ Although Lee recognized the serious shortage of oil products in China, he failed to recognize that the oil shortage would impede massed air operations. Even after the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis, in which the PLAAF had a dismal showing, an Air War College student drawing heavily from air intelligence studies equated Chinese Communist air force size with Chinese Communist air strength. Air Force Colonel Britt May in analyzing the role of the USAF in a war with China mentioned only the size of the Chinese Communist air force. May, although accurately identifying the size of the Communist air force, also presented the reader with a false sense of Chinese air strength by omitting any discussion of Chinese logistical or

¹⁶ Carl J. Felps, "China: Neutral, Ally or Enemy" (Air War College thesis, Air University, 1955), 26-7.

¹⁷ "Chinese Communist Air Force," *Naval Aviation News*, February 1953, 16.

¹⁸ "Showdown in the Far East?" *RAFFR*, December 1957, 15.

¹⁹ Lee, "Threat in the East," *RAFFR*, April 1956, 29.

supply problems that would prevent China from massing its air force and thus making it an effective weapon. May also omitted any analysis of Chinese Communist performance in the 1954-5 or 1958 Taiwan Strait Crises.²⁰

Military officers who did acknowledge Communist China's poor performance in air combat during either the Korean War or the Taiwan Strait Crises attempted to use China's massive population to turn Communist defeat into Communist victory. Resembling the realists who wrote for the American public, these officers argued along somewhat Darwinian lines: although the Chinese are not good, the combat experience and combat losses will leave only the strong pilots, which will still be a sizeable force. Writing in February 1953, Air Force Colonel Dale Brannon recognized that the Chinese Communist air force was a young force and thus lacking many experienced veterans. Brannon also stated, however, that Korea had been a massive training ground for Communist China's pilots, only the best of whom were still around.²¹ Later, during the 1958 Crisis, Army Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy echoed Brannon's analysis stating, "Closely related [to the subject of air defense] is the rather poor showing in the air which, so far, the reds have made against the American-trained and equipped Nationalist air force. One might hazard a guess that, with their plethora of man-power, the Reds were putting their air crews into training through actual combat."²² American officers who chose to believe Brannon or Dupuy's thesis would have been more optimistic about their chances with the

²⁰ Britt S. May, "Role of the Air Force in a Limited War in Southeast Asia" (Air War College Thesis, Air University, May 1959), 10.

²¹ Dale D. Brannon, "The Threat Posed by the Chinese Red Air Force," Air War College Thesis, Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, 23 February 1953, 45.

²² R. Ernest Dupuy, "Red Chinese Still Dependent on Soviets," *Army, Navy, Air Force, Register*, 11 October 1958, p. 3.

Chinese in combat; however, Brannon and Dupuy still left their colleagues with the feeling that it was only a matter of time before the Yellow Peril could overpower the forces of Democracy.

Closely related to the size of the Chinese Communist air force in American minds was the number of Chinese Communist airfields. Reports that the Chinese Reds could deploy over one thousand combat aircraft to any potential hotspot, especially to Fujian opposite Formosa, only enhanced American perceptions of Chinese Communist air strength. The military made the same error of logic that the American news media made regarding Chinese Communist airfields: both conflated the potential created by Chinese airfields and actual Chinese capability. Far East Air Forces' chief intelligence officer stressed, along with the number of aircraft, the number of airfields available to the Chinese Communists throughout China and North Korea.²³ American air officers were receiving similar reports from their British counterparts, who likely only reinforced the trend to confuse capability and potential. A British air analyst, in an article in the widely distributed *RAF Flying Review*, emphasized the number of Chinese Communist airfields but, in addition, pointed out that China had airfields in Fujian across the strait from Formosa.²⁴ British air officer Asher Lee articulated the real threat posed by Chinese airfields and likely influenced how Americans thought about the Chinese air force with the following idea: airfields gave the Chinese Communist air force the potential for great mobility; with a large number of airfields the PLAAF could rapidly redeploy its forces to trouble areas and concentrate its forces for an effective local defense or a focused

²³ Deputy for Intelligence, Far East Air Forces, "FEAF Intelligence Roundup," February 1954, p. 13, AFHRA K720.607A.

²⁴ "Showdown in the Far East?" *RAFFR*, December 1957, 14.

offensive strike.²⁵ Before the end of the Korean War, however, Air Force Colonel Dale Brannon had identified what Americans saw as the real strength of Communist China and the reason for Communist China's many airfields: "One source of strength in the CCAF appears to be that of airfields, *a strength which springs from the abundance of Chinese geography, land, and labor* [emphasis mine]."²⁶

China's large, aggressive, and effective air force (especially when considering its age) represented Chinese behavior and capabilities that confounded Americans. In their search for answers Americans, including military officers, turned toward some traditional images of China and the Chinese: the Chinese hordes, barbarity, and absence of nerves. That explanation did not sufficiently account for China's newfound air strength. American air officers used the Soviet Union to complete the explanation. Incorporation of the Soviet Union was not entirely unfounded. It was supported by the way Americans viewed the Chinese after 1949 and 1950. Further, from a military intelligence or military analyst perspective the Chinese Communist air force and Soviet air force appeared very similar. Ultimately, American air officers considered the People's Liberation Army Air Force, as Colonel Dale Brannon stated, "an air force by proxy, more appropriately designated as a Russian Air Task Force."²⁷ The Air Force by proxy idea led American military officers to overestimate the Chinese Communist air force. The People's Liberation Army Air Force was not equal to its counterpart in the Soviet Union; in fact it was not even a poor copy of the Soviet air force. Although some American intelligence

²⁵ Asher Lee, "Threat in the East," *RAFFR*, April 1956, 28.

²⁶ Dale D. Brannon, "The Threat Posed by the Chinese Red Air Force," Air War College Thesis, Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, 23 February 1953, 24.

²⁷ Dale D. Brannon, "The Threat Posed by the Chinese Red Air Force," Air War College Thesis, Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, 23 February 1953, 15-6, 47.

reports and one *RAF Flying Review* article pointed out that the Soviet Red Air Force was not the only military influence on the Communist Chinese air force, Americans insisted on believing Brannon's explanation. The result was that American air officers found the Chinese Communist air force a significant threat to American interests in the Far East, especially the security of Formosa and South Korea. In the eyes of American military officers the Soviets could help the Chinese overcome technological backwardness, the Soviets could supply oil, and the Soviets could solve China's massive logistical problem.

Few reports detailed the American or Japanese influence on the Chinese Communist air force. The British RAF officer, Asher Lee, stated in 1956, "But even a nation with the vast military resources and production of Russia could not forge an industrially-backward nation such as China into one of the world's leading military powers virtually overnight without some existing foundation to work upon."²⁸ Lee continued by establishing that American and, to a lesser extent, Italian air missions to Nationalist China had left their mark on the Chinese Communist air force because,

The Americans left behind them a large number of trained and partially-trained Chinese pilots and mechanics, as well as several squadrons of . . . [transports, fighters, and light bombers] . . . All this material was, of course, left for the Kuomintang air arm to help meet the rising Communist tide in China but the bulk of the pilots and ground crews and a large proportion of the aircraft passed to Mao Tse Tung's new Communist regime.²⁹

Lee further stated that Japanese pilots and mechanics left in China after Japan's surrender in 1945 had also trained the fledgling Communist air force and thus left their mark as well.³⁰ American intelligence reports confirmed Lee's assertion that American military

²⁸ Asher Lee, "Threat in the East," *RAFFR*, April 1956, 28.

²⁹ Asher Lee, "Threat in the East," *RAFFR*, April 1956, 28.

training had formed part of the foundation of Communist air power. American air intelligence reported that a Nationalist pilot who had defected to the Communists, Liu Shanben [Liu Shan-pen], had received extensive American training. Air intelligence officers in the Air Force and in the Navy also recognized that Liu Shanben had also reached a very prestigious position in the People's Liberation Army Air Force and probably had some influence on Chinese Communist air thought.³¹

Evidence of American, or even Italian or Japanese, influence on the Chinese Communist air force had little impact on American military thinking. The impact of the Cold War, the shock of America's loss of China to Communism, and the outward Soviet-like appearance of the People's Liberation Army and especially its air arm in terms of uniforms, equipment, and organizational structure easily trumped ideas of a Chinese Communist air force independent from the Soviet Union in any respect.

During the Korean War the Chinese People's Liberation Army in general did not conform to either Soviet appearance or Soviet thought. Shu Guang Zhang, a noted China scholar, has established in *Mao's Military Romanticism* that Chinese forces acted in accordance with their own cultural traditions and historical experiences and were hardly Russian in military thought and practice. Zhang established that Mao Zedong's approach to warfare had tremendous influence on how Chinese forces in Korea fought and furthered William Whitson's thesis established in *The Chinese High Command* that Mao's military thought bore little resemblance to Soviet military thought or even Sinified Soviet military thought.

³⁰ Asher Lee, "Threat in the East," *RAFFR*, April 1956, 28.

³¹ Department of the Air Force and Department of the Navy, "Air Intelligence Study," 1 September 1956, 79-81, AFHRA K-142.04822-25.

The elements of the Chinese military and specifically the Chinese air force that did not fit with America's perceptions of the "Soviet Chinese" changed dramatically after the Korean War. As Harlan Jencks points out, Stalin's death – incidentally, in the same year the when Korean War ended – resulted in a "honeymoon period" in Sino-Soviet relations that facilitated PLAAF modernization. China strove to be "modern and Soviet," and American air officers recognized that the already large Chinese Communist air force was further modernizing along Soviet lines.³²

Chinese air force, and also army, reforms were due in part to the fact that the new Minister of Defense, Peng Dehuai, was a student of Soviet military thought. Peng was, by all indications, a follower of the Soviet military style as William Whitson points out in his classic, *The Chinese High Command*.³³ Further, as Jürgen Domes, Peng's biographer, states,

The Korean experience strongly influenced P'eng's [Peng's] military thinking. The high losses of manpower during the first year of the Chinese military engagement apparently convinced him that the PLA needed a thoroughgoing modernization of its equipment, a strong drive towards professionalism, and the development of new techniques for modern combined operations. . . . He had once more realized – this time with deepened conviction – . . . that the PRC needed armed forces prepared for modern technical warfare, following the only model then available to the PLA – that of the Soviet Red Army.³⁴

³² Jencks, *Muskets to Missiles*, 1982, 48; Deputy for Intelligence, Far East Air Forces, "FEAF Intelligence Roundup," February 1954, p. 4, AFHRA K720.607A; "Showdown in the Far East?" *RAF Flying Review*, December 1957, 13.

³³ William Whitson focuses on the military ethic and military style of Chinese officers. Whitson states that military ethic is defined by an officer's outlook on three issues: "the role of the military in society, the authority of the commander," and promotion criteria. Military style, Whitson states, is defined by the "nature and effectiveness of the prevailing military organization, the prevailing concept and practice of strategy, and the prevailing tactical employment of military power," or more concisely, "the organization of military power." Military style is more easily observed and American intelligence officers would have recognized changes in military style long before recognizing more subtle changes in military ethic, evidence of which can be found primarily in public statements. Whitson, *Chinese High Command*, 1973, 3-5.

³⁴ Jürgen Domes, *Peng Te-huai: The Man and the Image* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 64-5.

Peng's ascension to the post of Minister of National Defense and the Soviet reforms that followed represented a significant change in Chinese Communist military thought and practice. Peng represented only one of three Chinese Communist military styles identified by Whitson. Mao, who had dominated Chinese Communist military thought prior to Peng's assumption of ministerial duties, was a follower of what Whitson termed the peasant military style and ethic. Essentially, the peasant military style and ethic roughly corresponds to what Shu Guang Zhang called "military romanticism." The peasant military style and ethic stressed the effectiveness of the people both as leaders and soldiers.³⁵ "Military Romanticism" took the emphasis on people to the extreme and, as Zhang points out, "Mao firmly believed that a weak army could win in a war against a strong enemy because he was convinced that 'man' could beat 'weapon.'"³⁶ Peng's devotion to the Soviet military style and ethic with its emphasis on professionalization and modernization was significantly different from Mao's thoughts on the military. Jürgen Domes emphasizes that Peng, as Minister of National Defense, instituted many reforms along Soviet lines.

The People's Liberation Army's transition to the Soviet military ethic was evidenced at the most superficial level in new Soviet-style uniforms. In the early 1950s American military officers were already looking to Chinese Communist uniforms for evidence of Soviet influence. During the Korean War Chinese ground forces hardly resembled Soviet ground forces in outward appearance but, as Rigg points out, the newer

³⁵ Whitson, *Chinese High Command*, 1973, 18-22.

³⁶ Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism*, 1995, 29.

air force uniforms gave early indications of Soviet influence.³⁷ With Peng's appointment to the post of Minister of National Defense, Chinese ground forces donned new, Soviet-type uniforms and, as Bueschel points out, the Chinese Communist air force followed suit.³⁸

Peng's appointment as the Minister of National Defense solidified, in many ways, the group of Soviet-oriented officers in the Chinese Communist air force's high command. Senior leaders Liu Yalou, Chang Qiankun, and Wang Bi had all received significant Soviet training.³⁹ These officers all thought along Soviet lines, and the rhetoric coming out of the Chinese army and air force during this time was heavily slanted toward Soviet thinking. American air and naval officers were aware of at least Liu Yalou and Chang Qiankun's Soviet connections, thus strengthening American military ideas of Soviet control over the Chinese Communist air force.

American intelligence officers were validated in their emphasis on the Soviet influence on the Chinese Communist air force when in the post-Korean War era the Chinese Communist air force leadership made its preference for the Soviet military style evident. Alice Hsieh, Harlan Jencks, and Richard Bueschel all state that the Chinese Communist air force underwent a significant organizational change in 1954 in response to the new senior leadership. Liu Yalou, commander of the PLAAF, organized his force so that the basic unit was the regiment, which was itself comprised of three companies,

³⁷ Rigg, *Red China's Fighting Hordes*, 1951, 320.

³⁸ Bueschel, *Communist Chinese Air Power*, 1968, 33; Pictures from Robert B. Rigg, *Red China's Fighting Hordes* revised ed. (Harrisburg: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1952), 121, 122.

³⁹ Kenneth W. Allen, *People's Republic of China, People's Liberation Army Air Force*, Washington, D.C.: Defense Intelligence Agency, 1991; William W. Whitson, *The Chinese High Command: A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927-71* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 472; Xiaoming Zhang, "China and the Air War in Korea, 1950-1953," *Journal of Military History* 62 (April 1998): 350.

each company consisting of three or four squads.⁴⁰ The new organization of the Chinese Communist armed forces generally resembled that of the Soviet military and evidenced the Chinese military leadership's preference for the Soviet military style.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Chinese air force looked like the Soviet air forces in the air. American military officers began to equate Chinese and Soviet air forces from the first encounters with Communist air forces over North Korea. Simple, unified markings on all Communist airplanes during the Korean War confused American air intelligence officers. The Far East Air Force deputy for intelligence stated in a Korean War intelligence report that he "lacked the information on which to make positive identification of SAF [Soviet Air Force], CCAF [Chinese Communist Air Force] or NKAFF [North Korean Air Force] units."⁴¹ The Chinese Communist air force obviously procured its aircraft from the Soviets, and during the 1950s they were all the most recent and most high-tech aircraft available in the Communist Bloc. Particularly, during the Korean War the Chinese were flying the MiG-15, and the USSR provided the Chinese, in the mid-1950s, with the newer MiG-17, at that time the most advanced Soviet fighter.

Chinese Communist use of obviously Soviet-built aircraft and the extensive Chinese air operations despite China's lack of oil products led American military officers to conclude that the Soviets were significantly involved in the weak Chinese Communist logistics and supply systems. American military officers examining the Chinese logistical system not only recognized its problems but also realized that it was dependent

⁴⁰ Bueschel, *Communist Chinese Air Power*, 1968, 32; Hsieh, *Communist China's Strategy*, 1962, 21; Jencks, *Muskets to Missiles*, 1982, 15.

⁴¹ "Weekly Intelligence Roundup, 20 May 1951" K720.607A

on, if not entirely controlled by, the Soviet Union. Army Colonel R. Ernest Dupuy stated that logistics was the "Achilles heel of the Red war potential."⁴² Dupuy also stated that the most important transportation link in the Chinese logistical system was in North China where Chinese supply routes entered Russia. This link was important because, as Dupuy realized, many essential supplies and materials as well as advanced weapons came to China from its Soviet allies.⁴³

Despite recognition of Chinese logistical and supply difficulties, American military officers thought that the Chinese air force would be able to mass its forces anywhere along China's perimeter for either offensive or defensive operations. Aware of the logistical and supply weaknesses, they discounted their effects in an effort to understand the stunning growth of Chinese air power during and immediately after the Korean War. The growth of the Chinese Communist air force was shocking to American military officers because they were convinced prior to the Korean War that China could not maintain a large, modern, and effective air force. During and after the Korean War, American military officers searched for an explanation for the tremendous growth of Communist Chinese air strength. Americans immediately incorporated age-old ideas of Chinese manpower into their explanation, but the real key to their explanations of Chinese air strength was the Soviet connection. American military officers saw only the Soviet influence, despite evidence that the Chinese air force was indebted to American – and to a lesser extent, Chinese Nationalist, Italian, and Japanese – influences as well as

⁴² R. Ernest Dupuy, "What's the Real Extent of Red China's Punch?" *Army, Navy, Air Force Register*, 4 October 1958, p. 3.

⁴³ R. Ernest Dupuy, "Will Red China's Ambitions Set Off World War III?" *Army, Navy, Air Force Register*, 23 August 1958, p. 3.

Soviet influence. Considering the People's Liberation Army Air Force a "Russian air task force" was in line with the way American culture perceived the Chinese after the events of 1949 and 1950. It was inconceivable, however, that this air force by proxy could be an immobile and ineffective air force. Thus, despite evidence to the contrary during the Korean War and the Taiwan Strait Crises, American military officers perceived the Chinese Communist air force to be an extremely effective air force capable of threatening American interests in East and Southeast Asia.

CHAPTER 4

EISENHOWER, HIS ADVISORS, AND EVIDENCE FOR THE IMPACT OF CULTURE

Eisenhower and his advisors, like the media and military officers, overestimated the People's Liberation Army Air Force. The administration's overestimation is borne out in conversations among members of the administration and senior military officers and in American actions during the two Taiwan Strait crises. The evidence suggests that American images of China and the Chinese caused, at least in part, Eisenhower and his senior civilian and military advisors to overestimate the Chinese Communist air force. These advisors included the Secretary of State, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Ambassador to the Republic of China, National Security Advisor, Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and high ranking military commanders in the Far East and Pacific regions (to include the Commanders in Chief of the Pacific and Far East and Commanders of America's Taiwan Defense Command and U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group to Taiwan).

Unfortunately, the evidence is only suggestive. The imagery present in the public or military discussions regarding the Chinese Communist air force was absent in the administration's discourse. Administration officials prepared position papers; White House, State Department, or Defense Department memoranda; Defense or State

Department telegrams; and minutes of National Security Council meetings to be concise. While the imagery present in other areas of discourse betrayed assumptions and the reasons for those assumptions, the lack of imagery in the conversation among policy-makers has the opposite effect – it is difficult to determine the assumptions present in many of the arguments made by or within the administration.

When pressed, however, at least two of Eisenhower's highest advisors clearly demonstrated that they held many of the same assumptions regarding the Chinese Communists and their air force as other Americans. This then suggests a reason for the Eisenhower administration's overestimation of the Chinese Communist air force; culture influenced the thinking of even America's highest officials.

Most members of the Eisenhower administration, including the president himself, at some point overestimated the Chinese Communist air force. Sometimes the Eisenhower administration simply miscalculated the Chinese Communists' already existing capabilities, but occasionally members of the administration imagined Chinese Communist capabilities where there were none. Although the overestimation was not tremendous, Eisenhower and his advisors did noticeably misjudge the People's Liberation Army Air Force.

Part of the administration's problem was a lack of adequate intelligence. Eisenhower biographer Stephen Ambrose states that during the 1954-5 crisis the president himself was not happy with the intelligence he was receiving from Allen Dulles' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).¹ Toward the end of the first crisis Admiral Arthur Radford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, also bemoaned the lack of operational

¹ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 382.

intelligence on the Chinese.² Indeed, the intelligence was generally poor. The Joint Chiefs of Staff especially displayed a tendency to base estimates of Chinese Communist air capabilities on only the number and type of aircraft available to the Chinese Communists in any given area rather than on intelligence regarding the capability of Communist pilots. For example, in August 1958, during the second Taiwan Strait Crisis, the Joint Chiefs approved a memorandum regarding U.S. plans to improve the capabilities of the Chinese Nationalist air force. The purpose of the memorandum was to set forth a plan for building up the Chinese Nationalist air force so that it would be "qualitatively superior to that of the Communist Chinese." While the Chiefs did devote considerable attention to ensuring that under the proposed plan the quality of Chinese Nationalist equipment (especially aircraft) would be equal or superior to Communist Chinese equipment, they included no discussion on methods or means for improving the quality of Chinese Nationalist pilots.³

One consequence of the Joint Chiefs' focus on technology and equipment was that they, and their staffs, were often woefully ignorant of logistical issues. During March 1955 Admiral Felix Stump, Commander in Chief of U.S. Pacific Command, warned the senior members of the administration that Chinese Communist coastal airbases posed a significant threat to the stability of the larger offshore islands, especially

² S. Everett Gleason, Memorandum of Discussion of the 242d Meeting of the National Security Council, 24 March 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. II, 391; Gordon H. Chang and He Di, "The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence?" *American Historical Review* 98 (December 1993): 1519.

³ Memorandum from Director, Joint Staff to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Improvement of the Chinese Nationalist Air Force," 19 August 1958, RG218, Geographic File, 1958, Formosa, Box 5. The Commander in Chief of Pacific Command was then responsible for the entire Pacific Ocean region. The post was and remains to this day, one of the most important and influential positions in the U.S. defense establishment.

Matsu.⁴ Over a month later (at the close of the crisis), however, Vice Admiral Pride, a U.S. military commander in the Taiwan Strait area, told the Chinese Nationalists that the coastal airfields were of little value because the Chinese Communists lacked the logistical capabilities to transport sufficient supplies, especially oil and gasoline, to the airfields and further that the airfields "were little more than runways without facilities or discernible ammunition or fuel storage areas."⁵ Despite the fact that there was opposition to Admiral Stump's estimate, it was his estimate that reached the president and his advisors.

Although the Chinese clearly lacked sufficient airbase facilities or logistical infrastructure, the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Air Force and the Chief of Naval Operations concurred that the Chinese could conduct large, sustained air operations. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense they stated, "Chinese Communist air forces are capable of massing sufficient MIG 15's without warning to gain local air superiority over the target area. Within a period of from 12 to 18 hours, up to 550 jet fighters and 150 piston fighters could be available. 250 piston type bombers and 150 IL 28's also could be employed without warning."⁶ Admiral Radford, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and a staunch supporter of the "China Lobby," disagreed with the other members of the Joint Chiefs on certain points stating that he felt this estimate was "optimistic" and, in particular, the Chinese would have difficulty maintaining the element of surprise with

⁴ U.S. Pacific Command, "Weekly Intelligence Digest: Ma-tsu Island Group," 11 March 1955, p. 10, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 9.

⁵ Memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs to the Acting Secretary of State, 21 April 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. II, 500.

⁶ Enclosure B, Memorandum from Admiral Arthur Radford to the Secretary of Defense, 11 September 1954, RG 341, Box 731.

such a large air armada given U.S. intelligence capabilities and the fact that most of the Chinese air force was in Manchuria at that time.⁷

During the 1958 crisis, despite the same lack of storage facilities on most airbases, only slightly better infrastructure (i.e. roads and railroads), and evidence of Chinese Communist air force inadequacy which was made obvious during the 1954-5 crisis, Defense Department officials continued to overestimate the Chinese Communist air force. By 1958 the Chinese Communists had moved more aircraft into Fujian province (opposite from Formosa, Quemoy, and Matsu) but still lacked the logistical capability to provide sufficient supplies for sustained air operations.⁸ During this period, however, Air Force General Nathan Twining, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and General Maxwell Taylor, Chief of Staff of the Army, agreed that the Chinese Communists would be able to conduct large, sustained air operations.⁹

CIA estimates tended to be more realistic. The CIA did a much better job of incorporating information regarding Chinese logistical capabilities and supply issues into their intelligence reports to senior administration officials. During the 1954-5 crisis especially, the CIA recognized and emphasized communications, logistics, and supply problems in the Chinese air force. Initially the CIA overestimated the Chinese Communist air force. Like the Joint Chiefs, CIA analysts thought that the Chinese Communists would be able to mass aircraft for large operations. The CIA recognized in

⁷ Memorandum from Admiral Arthur Radford to the Secretary of Defense, 11 September 1954, RG 341, Box 731.

⁸ Kenneth W. Allen, Glenn Krumel, and Jonathan D. Pollack, *China's Air Force Enters the 21st Century* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1995), 65.

⁹ Marshall Green, "Defense of the Offshore Islands," *FRUS, 1958-1960*, Vol. XIX microfiche supplement: 32; Gerard C. Smith, "9/2/58 State/JCS Meeting Notes," John Foster Dulles file, Gerard C. Smith series, Box 1.

September 1954, however, that the Chinese Communists, despite being provoked by Nationalist raids, were not able to conduct large air operations.¹⁰ With this information in hand, the CIA revised their estimate and began to take into account the Chinese fuel supply problems and lack of infrastructure.¹¹

Unlike Vice Admiral Pride's analysis of the Chinese Communist air force, the CIA's reports regularly reached the President, Secretary of State, National Security Advisor, and others either through Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles' briefings to the National Security Council or through written reports distributed throughout the administration. The actions and policy decisions taken by these officials indicates, however, that often the opinions of the Joint Chiefs were given more credence than those of Allen Dulles' CIA. The most noticeable action was to move the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet into the Taiwan Strait. The four aircraft carriers in the strait constituted a sizeable air force capable of strikes against the mainland and air defense operations for the offshore islands or the more important Nationalist islands (i.e. Formosa and the Pescadores).¹² The U.S. Air Force entered the action in the beginning of 1955 when a fighter bomber wing, armed with the Korean War F-86 air superiority fighter, moved to Taiwan.¹³ Although the CIA estimated that the Chinese Communist air force probably

¹⁰ "Memorandum: Discussion at the 213th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, September 9, 1954," Ann Whitman File, NSC series, Box 7.

¹¹ CIA, Office of Current Intelligence, "The Chinese Offshore Islands," September 8, 1954, p. 13-4, Ann Whitman File, International Series, Box 9.

¹² "7th Fleet Acted to Defend Formosa," *NYT*, 29 September 1954, p. 6; Memorandum: Discussion at the 234th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, January 27, 1955, Ann Whitman File, NSC series, Box 7

¹³ Telegram from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commander in Chief, Far East and the Commander in Chief Pacific, 25 January 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. II, 123.

lacked the ability to threaten Quemoy or Matsu let alone Taiwan or the Pescadores, American actions indicate that that Eisenhower, the Joint Chiefs, and the Secretary of State thought that the United States needed to either present a show of force or defend its interests in the Far East, particularly Formosa. When the 1958 crisis began the United States took similar but more impressive measures, again moving the 7th Fleet into the area, further moving 140 F-100 and F-104 advanced jet fighters to Taiwan, moving a surface to air anti-aircraft missile battalion (Nike-Hercules) to Taiwan, and supplying the Chinese Nationalist air force with the newest U.S. air-to-air missile, the AIM-9 (Air Intercept Missile) Sidewinder.¹⁴

Although the movement of American air forces into the Taiwan Strait area was a demonstration that the U.S. government thought of the Chinese Communist air force as a threat to Formosa and the other principal offshore islands, more significant are the policy decisions that Eisenhower, his secretaries, and the Joint Chiefs made during the crises. The President, Secretary of State, and the Joint Chiefs all seriously considered the use of nuclear weapons during both crises. They all concurred that the Chinese Communist air force would be the primary target for nuclear weapons in the event of any serious fighting. (Fortunately no more than a few air, sea, and small land engagements took place, none of which threatened any of the principal offshore islands.)

In January 1955 President Eisenhower told the National Security Council that after "talking this matter over with the Secretary of State, he and the secretary had believed that they [the president and secretary of state] could do a lot of things as a mere matter of course, but that we [the United States] must at all costs avoid another Yalu

¹⁴ Allen, et al. *China's Air Force*, 1995, 64-5; Message from Major General Earle G. Wheeler (USA) to CGUSARAL Ft Richardson Alaska, 27 August 1958, RG218, Geographic File, 1958, Formosa, Box 5.

River sanctuary situation in any struggle over Quemoy.”¹⁵ The Korean War experience weighed heavily on Eisenhower and his advisors during the two Taiwan Strait crises. In his M.A. thesis on the Air Force’s desire to use nuclear weapons in Korea, Michael May established that during the last year of the Korean War Eisenhower and the Air Force favored the use of at least tactical nuclear weapons against air bases in Manchuria in the event of an American offensive.¹⁶ May also established that among the reasons the Air Force and Eisenhower cited for the use of nuclear weapons was the size, strength, and offensive capability of the Chinese Communist air force; and although Air Force planners viewed the Chinese air force as “second string,” they believed it could still bloody America’s air forces in the Far East sufficiently to affect America’s nuclear war capability.¹⁷

Eisenhower and his advisors viewed the Taiwan Strait situation in similar terms. There were, however, significant differences between the Taiwan Strait crises and the Korean War. The primary difference was that the prior to the beginning of the Taiwan Strait crises, the vast majority of the People’s Liberation Army Air Force was designed, built, trained, and operated out of Manchuria. Further, the Chinese Communist infrastructure was designed to serve an air force only in Manchuria, not in Fujian, hence the massive logistics and supply problems even in the 1958 crisis. Nonetheless, Eisenhower and many of his advisors did not recognize the differences and thus when

¹⁵ S. Everett Gleason, Memorandum of Discussion at the 233d Meeting of the National Security Council, January 21, 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, Vol. II, 91.

¹⁶ Michael Perry May, “Air Force Nuclear War Strategy In Korea: In Pursuit of Decisiveness” (M.A. Thesis, Kansas State University, 2001), 122, 127.

¹⁷ May, “In Pursuit of Decisiveness,” 2001, 123-6.

Eisenhower stated that the U.S. must avoid another Yalu River sanctuary he was also making reference to the use of nuclear weapons.

Eisenhower made public that he thought the United States should use nuclear weapons against the Chinese in the event of war at a 16 March 1955 news conference. Eisenhower's statement came after plenty of suggestions from his advisors, many of which were more aggressive than Eisenhower's own plans. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was among the advisors who advocated the use of nuclear weapons in the event that the Chinese Communists attempted to invade Quemoy, Matsu, the Pescadores, or Taiwan. Dulles, echoing the Air Force's view during the Korean War, stated that in order to secure the principal offshore islands the United States would need to use nuclear weapons to nullify Chinese Communist offensive capabilities, including airpower. Dulles also emphasized that the United States would need to use nuclear weapons "because it would not be possible to knock out airfields and gun implacements [*sic*] with conventional weapons in the face of *Chinese manpower and capacity to replace and rebuild* (emphasis mine)."¹⁸ Although Dulles may have been responding to statistics in the *Statesman's Yearbook* or the *World Almanac*, it is important to note that Dulles focused on Chinese manpower despite reports from his brother Allen Dulles, the Director of Central Intelligence, that poor logistics and supply problems effectively neutralized China's massive reserve of manpower.

Others echoed Dulles' sentiments. One of Eisenhower's most trusted advisors, Andrew Goodpaster, after a trip to Taiwan and the offshore islands, stated that in the event of a determined Chinese Communist effort to take the offshore islands the United

¹⁸ John Foster Dulles, "Breakfast Conversation with Senator George, March 7, 1955," JFD Papers, 1951-9, Subject Series, George, Senator Walter F.

States would have to use "special weapons" – "special weapons" was an obvious reference to nuclear weapons.

Discussion of policy among senior advisors during the 1958 crisis betrayed similar overestimations. Army General and Chief of Staff Maxwell Taylor stated in one discussion with State Department officials that due to the size of the Chinese air force the United States would have to resort to using nuclear weapons in the event of war over the offshore islands. In the same meeting Secretary Dulles stated emphatically that, "We can't match 'em conventional."¹⁹

Although Communist China faced losing international prestige and expensive military equipment, they submitted to Nationalist overflights and aerial attacks during both crises. Indeed, although Eisenhower and his advisors seriously considered the use of nuclear weapons against the Chinese Communist air force, and while those considerations helped determine the cautious course of action which Eisenhower and his advisors decided to take, there was really little need for any such discussion. The Chinese air force did not merit the use of nuclear weapons.

When Eisenhower and his advisors seriously considered the use of nuclear weapons against the Chinese Communist air force they displayed the degree to which they were overestimating the Chinese Communists and their air arm. Their apparent overestimation begs the question, why? There are numerous explanations for the overestimation; it is very likely that Eisenhower and his advisors, like most military planners, overestimated the Chinese Communist air force in order to justify the use of overwhelming military force in the event of war with China. It is also likely that no one

¹⁹ Gerard C. Smith, "9/2/58 State/JCS Meeting Notes," John Foster Dulles file, Gerard C. Smith series, Box 1.

will ever *prove* that the administration purposefully miscalculated. Evidence does suggest, however, that American images and ideas of China affected how Eisenhower and his advisors thought about the Chinese Communist air force. Unfortunately, the evidence is only suggestive and only further, extensive research could reveal if these assumptions or perceptions affected others in the administration. Further, of the two administration officials who were pressed to examine their assumptions regarding the Chinese only one is identifiable: Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Walter S. Robertson, whose views are recorded in an oral history. The oral history is itself problematic because memory can be unreliable. The other administration official, who is unidentifiable, also participated in an interview. He (or she) participated in an interview with Harold Isaacs for his book *Scratches on Our Minds*. Isaacs did not reveal the names or specific positions of those he interviewed but in this case he did state that the subject was a "former high official of the Eisenhower administration."²⁰ This is problematic because it is unclear what his or her position was in the administration. With a high position would also come sensitive information, but without knowing which position this individual held it is impossible to determine exactly to what sensitive information he or she would have been privy. The one thing that is certain is that Robertson and the anonymous former high official are not the same person since Robertson was *still* a high official when Isaacs was writing. Again the evidence, although problematic, is suggestive, and it offers one possible and plausible explanation for the actions and thoughts of Eisenhower and his men.

²⁰ Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York: John Day, 1958), 226.

When pressed to examine their assumptions about the Chinese Communists these two senior administration officials immediately began to refer to images of "Red" China, the shock of Chinese technical competency in 1950, and a host of other images of the Chinese. Interviewed in 1967, Eisenhower's Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East invoked ideas and images of very "Red" Chinese. When asked if he saw any sign of the Sino-Soviet split during his tenure as Assistant Secretary of State, Robertson replied, "There was none whatsoever. Just the contrary was true. I was in China on V-J Day [in 1945], and after V-J Day I visited North China, and as I went through the territory that was Communist territory, you found these huge posters, not of Mao Tse-tung but of Stalin."²¹ It is likely that in Robertson's mind many other images and ideas of the powerful Soviet Union accompanied these images and ideas of a very "Soviet" China. Unfortunately the interview did not go into more depth. More revealing is the anonymous official who said, when pressed by Isaacs to examine his or her assumptions about China,

I was brought up to think the Chinese couldn't handle a machine. Now, suddenly, the Chinese are flying jets! The American idea was that Asiatics are nonmechanical, except the Japanese, and the Japanese were freaks, not really mechanical, just copied what others did. In practically everything one ever read . . . the Asiatic is always plowing with his fingernails and the European is handling the machine, now the Chinese is flying a jet! Disturbing, especially since you have several hundred million of them teamed up with the USSR. I always thought the Yellow Peril business was nonsense. . . . Now I can visualize that Asiatics teamed up with the Slavs could indeed conquer the world!²²

This individual was certainly shocked by Chinese technical capability and that shock could have easily led to overcompensation. Further, the mention of the "Asiatics" is

²¹ Walter S. Robertson, "The Reminiscences of Walter S. Robertson," interview by Ed Edwin (Oral History Research Office Columbia University, 18 April 1967), 130-1.

²² Quoted in Isaacs, *Scratches*, 1958, 226-7.

evidence that this individual's ideas of various "Asiatics" are transferable and that there would have been little difficulty for him or her to transfer attributes from one Oriental or Asiatic people to another. Finally, images of Soviet Red and Yellow Peril blend together, which certainly led to an overestimation of the overall Sino-Soviet capability.

When pressed, these two senior officials showed that they held many of the same assumptions regarding the Chinese Communists as other elements of the American public. Any conclusions drawn from this very limited evidence must remain tentative. Nevertheless, it is suggestive that the views expressed by these two officials not only drew on popular American images of China and the Chinese but were also congruent with the Eisenhower administration's cautious attitude toward the PLAAF. Although rarely glimpsed in the archival documents, this sort of thinking may have been widespread among U.S. policy makers.

CONCLUSION

American culture affected what Americans wrote about the Chinese Communist air force during the 1950s. The impact of culture on how these Americans interpreted information was subtle. Images, some subtle and some not so subtle, appeared again and again throughout American writings regarding the Chinese Communist air force in the 1950s. Even when the images were not present, as was the case with the discourse among Eisenhower and his senior advisors, the effect of those images and ideas had some part in shaping thoughts and actions. Ultimately, culture affected and helped determine how America's top officials, military officers, and members of the press interpreted information or intelligence regarding the Chinese Communist air force.

The most powerful images of the Chinese in America during the two Taiwan Strait crises were images and ideas of a Red China dominated or, at least, aided by the Soviet Union and China's massive population, the hordes, the yellow peril. Harold Isaacs quoted one senior Eisenhower administration official, "I always thought the Yellow Peril business was nonsense. . . . Now I can visualize that the Asiatics teamed up with the Slavs could indeed conquer the world!"¹ The traumatic events of 1949 and 1950 along with the impact of the "China Lobby" and the evolution of American hatred for the Soviet Union led Americans to view China as thoroughly Red, or, as the Chinese would

¹ Quoted in Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York: The John Day Company, 1958), 227.

say, like a beet instead of a radish (while the beet is red, or communist, throughout, the radish is only red on the outside). Images of China's "hordes" were inescapable.

Everyone knew (and probably still does know) of China's massive population.

Other images and ideas of China were also important. Images of Chinese barbarity, cruelty, or sadism far predated American conflict with China in the 1950s but still colored the writings of journalists and military officers alike. In addition, certainly Americans "knew" that the Chinese had no nerves (that is, they were apparently unaffected by hardship, suffering, and death). These images fit well with the China that was America's most recent enemy in the 1950s.

Some images did not fit so well, however. American images of the militarily inept Chinese were quickly brushed aside when the Chinese entered the Korean War. It was easy enough for Americans to quickly ascribe images of Mongolian military prowess to the Chinese. Technical incapacity was more difficult to deal with. The image and idea of Chinese technical incapacity had its roots in the Enlightenment and it was handed down to Americans who maintained it until the Korean War. Americans viewed all Orientals as being technically inept and thus used images of the Soviet Union to explain the purported success of the Chinese Communist air force. When confronted with behavior that did not fit America's idea of China, Americans tried to either find an Oriental people that would naturally display such behavior (i.e. the Mongols and military prowess) or simply use the Soviet Union as a patch. The Chinese were not technically capable but the Chinese were "Soviet" too and, thus, technically competent.

Public discourse regarding the Chinese Communist air force was speckled with images of barbarity and cruelty. The public discourse was dominated by journalists,

either for magazines or for newspapers. Because of the limited discourse on the subject, journalists led the American opinion of and controlled the public information regarding the Chinese Communist air force. When writing about the Chinese Communist air force journalists did use images of barbarity, but far more important were images and ideas of China's hordes and of Soviet influence, domination, and aid. Although the Nationalists regularly bested their opponents across the Strait, the media rarely highlighted Nationalist victories during the two crises. Instead, the media gave front-page attention to Communist victories. And when the media did highlight Nationalist victories it was done with a tone of surprise, as if the author were dispelling a popular myth. The media, in general, overestimated the Chinese Communist air force as if they saw only the aspects of the Chinese air force which fit with American images of China: large, "Soviet," cruel, and barbarous.

Occasionally a journalist would publish a dissenting report or would include some truly insightful comments regarding the People's Liberation Army Air Force in an otherwise ordinary article, though it is not apparent why some reporters managed to find insight where others didn't. Further, reporters could contradict themselves. For example, Hanson Baldwin, the *New York Times* military analyst, tended to write stories that differed little from those of other reporters, but occasionally he showed some true insight and accurately claimed that the Chinese Communist air force was not a threat to American interests in the Far East. There is no evidence to establish why Baldwin showed insight where few others did or why Baldwin contradicted himself. One hypothesis, however, is that a journalist's insight was dependent on the source. The CIA

tended to produce more realistic analyses of the Chinese Communist air force than the military.

It is likely that some journalists got their information from military officers. Although the U.S. military's officer corps was probably the most well informed on facts regarding the Chinese Communist air force when compared with the American media or U.S. policy makers, it also proved to be the most affected by American images and ideas of the Chinese. American military officers incorporated ideas of Chinese nervelessness and technological incapacity into their writings. They were also heavily influenced by the idea of Chinese manpower. The most important image for American officers, however, was the image of the "Soviet" or Red Chinese. Privy to information on not only the Chinese air force but the Soviet air force as well, military officers were able to see the numerous apparent similarities between the two Red air forces. In fact, there were significant differences between the Chinese and Soviet air forces, and the Chinese air force was not a very capable force at all. The American military did recognize problems of supply and logistics in the PLAAF. Despite this recognition, American officers seem to have been bound by the paradigm set forth by American images and ideas of China. American officers focused only on those aspects of the Chinese Communist air force which fit with the American paradigm regarding the Chinese.

Military officers prepared analyses of the Chinese Communist air force for the Joint Chiefs and the Commanders of the Pacific and Far East regions. The Chiefs themselves had the greatest tendency among senior officials to overestimate the Chinese Communist air force. The CIA had a more realistic view of the PLAAF, often considering the effects of logistics and supply problems on PLAAF capabilities.

Ultimately, however, Eisenhower, John Dulles, and the Joint Chiefs probably relied more on the military opinion rather than the CIA opinion. Their actions and words indicate that Eisenhower and his senior advisors overestimated the Chinese Communist air force. By the beginning of February 1955 the Joint Chiefs were watching the Chinese air force intently. In their view, PLAAF movements and actions would betray Chinese Communist intentions.² In the opinion of many senior members of the administration, nuclear weapons would be necessary to neutralize the large and powerful Chinese Communist air force. Certainly, this was a gross overestimation of the Chinese Communist air force, which had barely been able to support the small amphibious assault on Yijiangshan which the Nationalists had only opposed with ground forces. Even in the era of massive retaliation, there was no need for nuclear weapons to neutralize the Chinese Communist air force because the PLAAF was ineffective and incapable of any major offensive operations.

Indeed, administration officials were worried about the use of nuclear weapons in defense of Taiwan. Eisenhower and his staff feared that in order to destroy the Chinese Communist offensive capabilities, which in the administration's opinion were largely located in the Chinese air force, large numbers of nuclear weapons would be necessary. In April 1955 John Foster Dulles and the Joint Chiefs estimated that the U.S. would have to accept large numbers of Chinese civilian casualties as a result of an effective strike on Chinese offensive capabilities.³ Even though Dulles had publicly stated in March 1955

² Bromley Smith, "Memorandum: Discussion at the 237th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, February 17, 1955," Ann Whitman File, NSC series, Box 7.

³ John Foster Dulles, "Formosa Draft, 8 April 1955," John Foster Dulles file, White House Memoranda, Box, 2.

that the United States could use nuclear weapons against China without causing high Chinese civilian casualties and Eisenhower had publicly stated that the United States would use nuclear weapons in the Strait just as we would use a bullet, the administration was still worried about both casualties and a possible Soviet response to American nuclear strikes on Chinese airfields.⁴ Although Stephen Ambrose and Leonard H. D. Gordon have both argued that it was Eisenhower's opposition to the use of force that led to eventual peace instead of war in the Taiwan Strait, their explanations for why Eisenhower sought peace so vigorously are inadequate. Ambrose states that Eisenhower himself didn't know if he would order the use of nuclear weapons in the defense of Taiwan or the offshore islands, yet his remarks to Secretary of State Dulles reveal that he did recognize the need for nuclear weapons. Further, American overestimation of the People's Liberation Army Air Force led to the continuing escalation of tensions in the Taiwan Strait in late February and March 1955 after Chiang evacuated the Dachen. Historians Gordon H. Chang and He Di argue that the situation should have stabilized after the Dachen evacuation but instead tensions increased because Eisenhower's advisors thought the Chinese were building up forces for further offensive actions. Chang and He argue that this alarm was due to faulty intelligence.⁵ The faulty intelligence that Chang and He claim led to increasing tensions was mostly related to the Chinese Communist air force and its capabilities.

⁴ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 382-3.

⁵ Gordon H. Chang and He Di, "The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence?" *American Historical Review* 98 (December 1993): 1517-20.

Why did Eisenhower and his advisors overestimate the Chinese Communist air force? Certainly there are many possible explanations. Military planners tend to overestimate their enemy in order to secure enough force to win a confrontation with as few losses as possible – overwhelming force capable of decisively and quickly deciding a battle or war is better than a force that is merely capable of winning. They may have also been reacting, or overreacting, to their experiences in the Korean War. It is imperative to remember, however, that Korean War experiences heavily affected American images and ideas regarding the Chinese. Statements of important administration officials, including the most senior expert on Far East affairs, Walter S. Robertson, suggest that American images and ideas of China played a role in the administration's overestimation of the Chinese Communist air force. Further, the administration was receiving intelligence analyses from the military. Military officers heavily relied on cultural assumptions regarding the Chinese when developing analyses of the Chinese air force.

Ultimately, those Americans who did actively think about the Chinese Communist air force had access and used good raw data. Certainly China and its air force had connections to the Soviet Union, which just about everyone in the U.S. realized. Americans also had access to data on the size of the Chinese air force, information regarding Chinese logistics, and information on Chinese performance in the air. It was during the process of interpreting and analyzing the raw data that American culture made its impact.

In the wake of the 1958 crisis the Eisenhower administration prepared a series of limited war studies, one of which concerned another crisis in the Strait. Despite the poor PLAAF performance in August and September 1958, administration planners once again

seriously overestimated the PLAAF. Focusing on Soviet aid to and the size of the Chinese Communist air force, U.S. military planners painted a grim picture of an offshore island crisis in 1960.⁶ Planners did not, however, address the fact that new Soviet arms and an even larger air force would not solve the PLAAF's main problems of supply and logistics. Images of Soviet influence and massive size continued even after the 1958 crisis. Just as images of the China market persisted in American commercial circles for decades despite only limited trade with China and no signs of improvement, images of Soviet influence and Chinese manpower had similar effects on the Americans in the 1950s. Images of Chinese barbarity and nervelessness also colored American perceptions of the Chinese Communist air force. Though their effect is subtle, American assumptions of Chinese behavior and abilities marked the American discourse regarding the Chinese Communist air force and that discourse helped determine the course of American actions during the two Taiwan Strait crises.

⁶ Limited War Study Group, "United States and Allied Capabilities for Limited Military Operations," July 7, 1960, White House Office, Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, Records 1952-61 file, NSC series, Briefing Notes sub series, Box 11.

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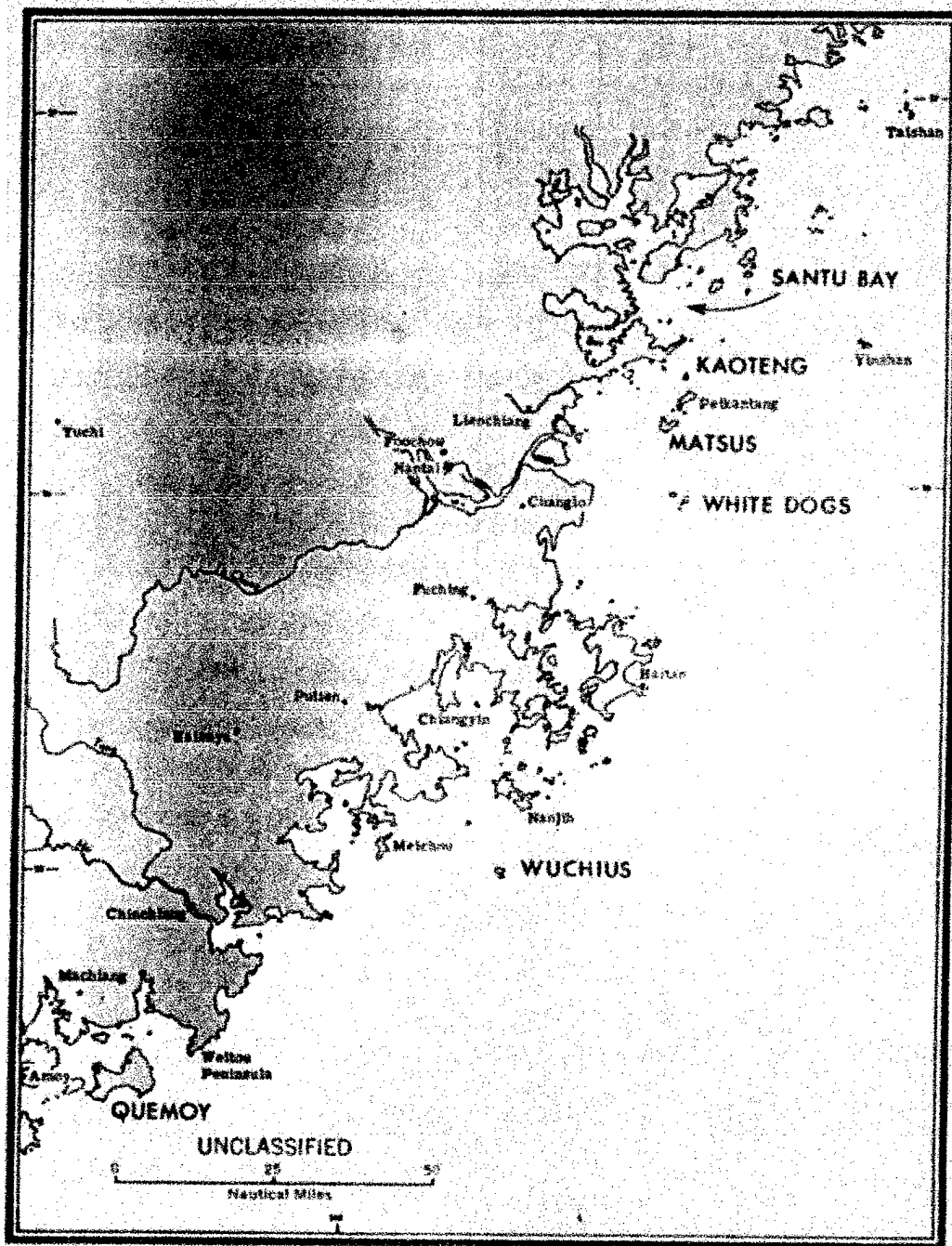
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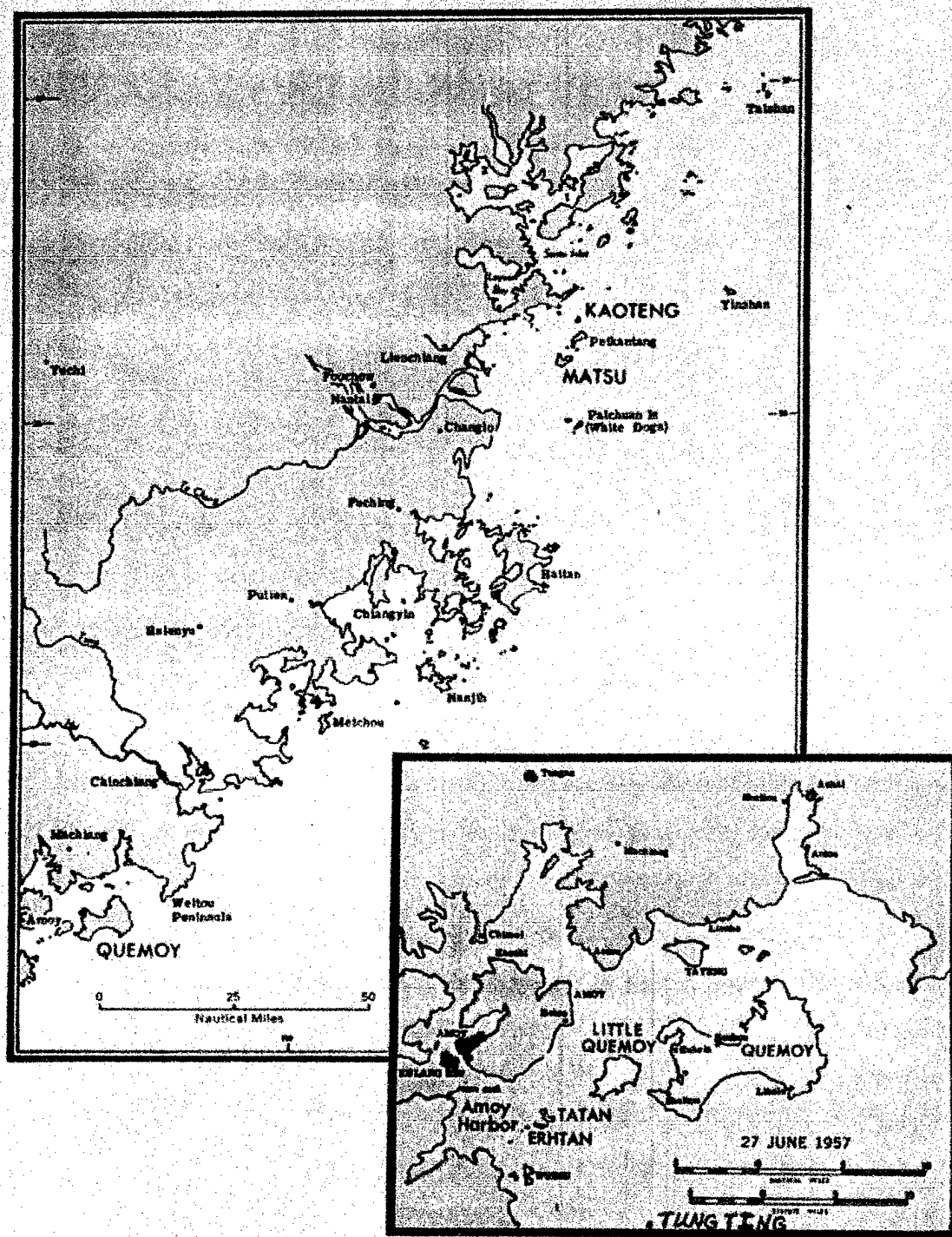
APPENDIX A:

Maps



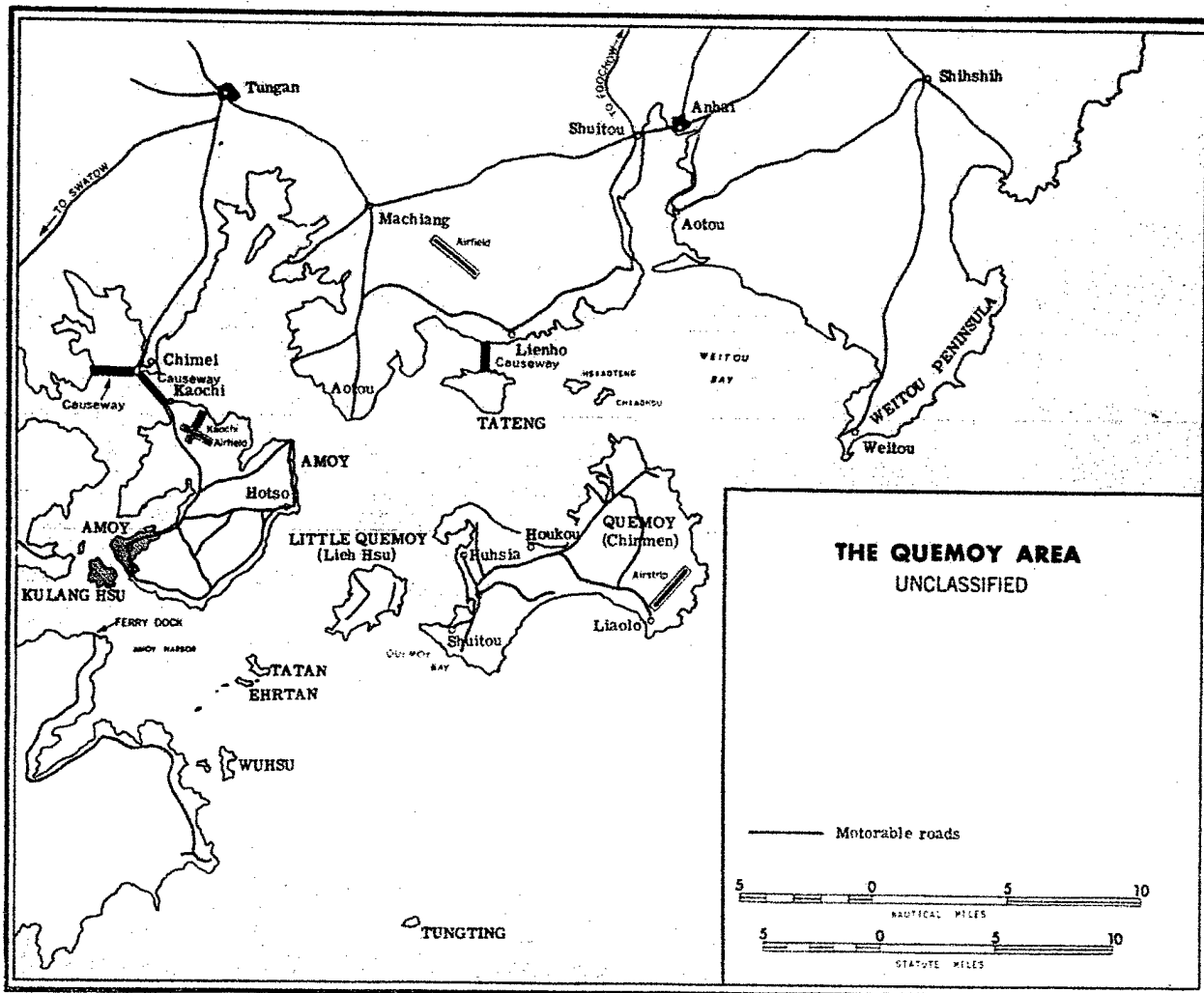
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Figure 1. The China Coast. Source: Eisenhower, Dwight D. Papers as President of the United States, 1953-61 (Ann Whitman File), International Series, Box 11. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas.



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Figure 2: Quemoy and the China Coast. Source: Eisenhower, Dwight D. Papers as President of the United States, 1953-61 (Ann Whitman File), International Series, Box 11. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas.



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Figure 3. Quemoy. Source: Eisenhower, Dwight D. Papers as President of the United States, 1953-61 (Ann Whitman File), International Series, Box 11. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas.

APPENDIX B:

Chinese and Soviet Uniforms and Aircraft Markings

Figures 4 and 5

Chinese and Soviet Aircraft Markings

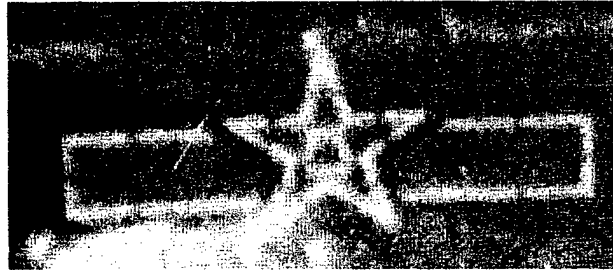


Figure 4. Chinese Aircraft Marking, Red Star with yellow character and outline. The red star bears particular resemblance to Soviet aircraft markings. Source Richard Bueschel, *Communist Chinese Air Power*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1968).



Figure 5. MiG-15 With Soviet markings. Note the Red Star. Source: <http://www.cavanaughflightmuseum.com/Aircraft/Mig-15/Pic9.jpg>



Figure 6. (Above) Peng Dehuai in Soviet-style uniform. Source: Jürgen Domes, *Peng Te-Huai: The Man and the Image* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), vii.



Figure 7. (Left) Soviet Officer. Source: *Soviet Army Uniforms & Insignia, 1945-75*, with an introduction by A. J. Barker (London: Arms & Armour Press, 1976), 5.